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- U: Selected Foreign Service stations
- P: Equipment manufacturers, any subgroups
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Serious safety issue concerning life buoys

Life buoys fill up with water and sink when deployed in water.

Based on information received from the Swedish Maritime Authorities and recent reports from Norwegian ship-owners, the Norwegian Maritime Directorate (NMD) hereby issues a safety alert concerning buoyancy issues on life buoys.

Model: VELERIA SAN GIORGIO, Italy, wheelmark nr. 0474.

The cause being an event in Sweden where suspicion arose when checking life buoys and finding them heavier than normal. Upon further inspection it was discovered that the life buoys were filled with water and that water was dripping out in the area around the reflective tape. There was also a visible crack on one of the reflective tapes, and when pushed on, a 15mm hole appeared. Several litres of water were subsequently drained from this hole. When the life buoys were thrown into the water, they sank. The issue seems to be related to the foam inside the buoy. The foam does not fill out the available space inside the buoy and leaves room for water to ingress. The cause of this foam related problem is not known at present. The inspection revealed that all life buoys (which had been bought in 2004) on board the vessel had the same problem.

Model: EVAL, Lifebuoy Code: 542, Greece, wheelmark nr. 003807

In connection with inspection of life buoys on Norwegian vessels, issues of a similar nature as described above has been identified with life buoys manufactured by the Greek company, EVAL.



Photo: Swedish Transport Agency

The NMD urges ship-owners, ship crews, harbours, marinas, and others in possession of life buoys, to inspect their life buoys immediately in order to verify whether the same issues apply to their life buoys, and make sure that the area surrounding the reflective tape is inspected thoroughly.

There is no requirement for a national type approval of life buoys in Norway since the NMD requires that such equipment shall be tested, approved and marked ("wheelmark") according to the requirements described in EU directive 96/98EU, IMO Res MSC.48 (66).

The issues that have been discovered will be brought forward to relevant EU bodies for further action. When this has been finalized, the NMD will revert with further information.

The NMD expects necessary safety measures to be implemented if issues with life buoys should be detected upon inspections.

The NMD further requests to be kept informed should similar issues be found on other life buoys than those described in this safety alert.

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