

Is your liferaft up to standard?



Chances are it might not comply with recent changes in the UK for Coded Vessel requirements and the new policy adopted by the RYA.

As a UK Certifying Authority, under most normal conditions, we will no longer accept a coded vessel, newly registered to the RYA, if it is equipped with an ORC liferaft.

This policy has been adopted ahead of the total enforcement of MGN280, as it is considered that the ORC liferaft

falls short of the safety requirements essential for coastal and offshore waters. With manufacturers now producing newer and safer liferafts for ISAF Regulations and the more recently adopted ISO 9650, it has become appropriate to drop the ORC liferaft, with its inferior safety standards.

Under previous MCA Codes, certifying authorities could permit an ORC liferaft for coded vessels operating in area categories 1, 2, 3, and 4, so long as the vessel carried a SOLAS

A or B upgrade grab bag for their correct operation. This has changed. Unless already in operation the ORC is no longer accepted by MGN 280. Additionally existing ORC rafts will be phased out at the end of their serviceable life. These changes may well affect vessels for training centres, charter or other commercial use.

So for new vessels just about to go through the coding process, ORC liferafts will no longer be permitted – you should either carry an ISAF (Appendix A Part 2) or the ISO 9650 Type 1 Part 1, which is an equivalent design. Both liferafts feature a boarding ramp to allow easier access and other features giving better safety.

When could an ORC liferaft be allowed? Fundamentally, it can only be allowed if it has previously been certificated and serviced annually and then only for its serviceable life. In most cases this will be down to the manufacturer, when the raft comes due for its annual service at an approved service station, which may re-certificate the liferaft, only if

it is still fit for purpose. Dispensations from the new policy may also be considered on a case by case basis for rafts for more than 12 persons.

One further point of reference for charter vessels when racing offshore, is that the yacht need not comply with the code while racing or in transit, so long as it complies with the relevant sailing regulations in terms of safety, such as the current ISAF Offshore Special Regulations. These regulations have also been phasing out the ORC liferaft since 2003.

Further information, contact our Technical Department on 0845 345 0383 or email technical@rya.org.uk.

