



Merchant Shipping Directorate



## USE OF SODIUM BICARBONATE IN FIREFIGHTING POWDER

### *Information Notice 21*

*Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters,  
Owners' Representatives and Recognised Organisations*

The Directorate wishes to draw the attention of all concerned to the use of sodium bicarbonate in firefighting powder and the certification issued by KR Hellas for fixed dry chemical powder fire-extinguishing systems.

Following assessments and clarifications from KR Hellas and the Forum of Notified Bodies for Marine Equipment (MarED), it was concluded that the requirement in 3.4 IMO MSC.1/Circ.1315, specifically stating that, "*only chemicals based on the salts of potassium should be used*" is justified from a maritime safety perspective. There are concerns that since sodium bicarbonate powder consist of irregular shaped particles and tend to decompose at temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius, this may result in a poor flow of powder which ultimately may lead to the clogging of the pipelines and malfunctioning of the fire fighting system.

To this effect, it is recommended that shipowners and operators of Maltese registered ships undertake the necessary actions to ensure that the systems are in compliance with the IMO instruments. This should be done at the earliest opportunity to avoid the risk of unsafe operations.

The cooperation and assistance of all parties is therefore solicited.

Merchant Shipping Directorate

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Malta Transport Centre  
Marsa, MRS 1917 Malta

Tel: +356 2125 0360 Fax: +356 2124 1460

Email: [mershipmalta.tm@transport.gov.mt](mailto:mershipmalta.tm@transport.gov.mt)

[www.transport.gov.mt/ship-registration](http://www.transport.gov.mt/ship-registration) Transport Malta is the Authority for Transport in Malta set up by Act XV of 2009



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