



Subject: Instruction to accredited surveyors for the conditions where the use of flush hatches are acceptable.

General: The Uniform Shipping Laws (USL) Sections **5C – Watertight Subdivision of Passenger Vessels**, and **5D – Watertight Subdivision of Class 2 and Class 3 Vessels**, stipulate the requirements for sill and coaming heights surrounding hatches leading through the watertight deck.

USL Section 5C, Part II - Class 1 vessels less than 35 metres in measured length, C68.1, Note 3.; specifies the following:

Where, in Class 1D & 1E vessels, access into spaces below the weatherdeck are situated within the mid half beam of the vessel, and are of a width less than half the beam of the vessel and the Authority is satisfied that the safety of the vessel will not be impaired by doing so, the Authority may determine that sills for such accesses may be omitted.

USL Section 5D, Part III – Special provisions applicable to Class 2 vessels not subject to the provisions of the Load Lines Section and Class 3 vessels other than vessels to which Part IV applies, D.20.2; specifies the following:

The height of hatch coamings specified in sub-clause D.20.1 may be reduced where compliance with the requirements of that sub-clause is not reasonably practical, provided that the hatches are:

- (a) *situated within the mid half beam of the vessel*
- (b) *of a width less than half the beam of the vessel*
- (c) *closed with efficient weathertight covers of steel or other equivalent material fitted with gaskets and clamping devices and capable of being rapidly closed and battened down, and*
- (d) *the Authority is satisfied that the safety of the vessel in the service sea conditions will not be impaired by doing so.*

USL Section 5D, Part IV – Modifications applicable to Class 2B and 2C vessels less than 16 metres in measured length, Class 3B and 3C vessels less than 20 metres in measured length, Class 2D, Class 2E, Class 3D and Class 3E vessels, D.31.2; specifies the following:

The height of the hatch coamings and sill specified in sub-clause D.31.1 may be reduced or omitted where compliance with the requirement of that sub-clause is not reasonably practical, provided that the openings are:

- (a) *situated within the mid half of the vessel*
- (b) *of a width less than half the beam of the vessel, and*
- (c) *the Authority is satisfied that the safety of the vessel in the service condition will not be impaired by doing so.*

Directions:

Where the criteria for the location and size of openings meet the requirements of the USL, shown above, surveyors may use the following conditions, regarding the reduction or omission of hatch coamings/sills, to determine if *“the Authority is satisfied that the safety of the vessel in the service sea conditions will not be impaired by so doing”* to accept the use of flush hatches¹:

1. Hatch must not be necessary for general operation or to be normally required to be accessed at sea;
2. If access is required to the space at sea, or the space is a manned space; then a separate means of access, that is protected (i.e. a hatch with a coaming or a WT bulkhead door) shall be provided;
3. The space must be serviced by a bilge pump, irrespective of other exemptions or equivalent means of compliance;
4. The location of the flush hatch, should not be exposed to green water under normal operating conditions;
5. Hatch should not be a dedicated passenger access;
6. Flush hatches are to be marked with the following text (of at least 75mm height);
 - MUST BE CLOSED AT SEA (marked on both sides)
7. Flush hatches that form escapes must be marked with black and yellow (or contrasting colour) markings extending 100mm past the periphery of the hatch and the following text (of at least 75mm);
 - MUST BE CLOSED AT SEA (marked on both sides)
 - DO NOT COVER
8. Hatches that form escapes shall be of the FREEMAN (or similar) type, so as to enable opening from the inside; and
9. Hatches that are not of the FREEMAN type are to be permanently dogged with flush fitting locking devices.

Approved, stamped plans, should make note of any flush hatches which have been assessed using this ITS.

Note: 1) This ITS is only applicable to those vessels specified in the USL Sections; 5C Part II, 5D Part III, and 5D Part IV. It is not applicable to Class 1C vessels, or vessels in operational area B or B extended.

Contact: DCVSurvey@amsa.gov.au
