GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF MARITIME AFFAIRS
(PORTS & SHIPPING WING)
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No.3 (3)/2021-CNS Karachi, the 19th November, 2026.

MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE
Circular No. 003/2026

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Notice to all Pakistani-flagged ships; shipowners, ship operators and ship managers; Masters; Recognized Organizations (ROs); shipping agents, Surveyors, Maritime Training Institutes; and other concerned Maritime stakeholders.

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Subject: MANDATORY REPORTING OF FREIGHT CONTAINERS LOST AT SEA OR OBSERVED DRIFTING AT SEA — AMENDMENTS TO SOLAS CHAPTER V, REGULATIONS 31 AND 32

1. Purpose

1.1 The Directorate General Ports & Shipping (DGP&S), Ministry of Maritime Affairs, hereby draws the attention of all concerned to the amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS), as amended Chapter V (Safety of Navigation), Regulations 31 (Danger Messages) and 32 (Information Required in Danger Messages), adopted by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee through Resolution MSC.550(108). These amendments entered into force on 01 January 2026.

1.2 The amendments introduce mandatory and harmonized reporting requirements for (i) freight container(s) lost overboard from a ship, and (ii) freight container(s) observed drifting at sea. The reporting requirement applies irrespective of the contents of the container(s).

2. Applicability

2.1 This Circular applies to every Pakistani-flagged ship involved in the loss of one or more freight containers and to every ship that observes one or more freight containers drifting at sea. Masters of foreign-flagged ships operating in or reporting an incident within waters under Pakistan's jurisdiction should also bring the information without delay to the attention of the nearest competent Pakistani coastal authority/JMICC and PMSA, as appropriate.

2.2 The requirements apply to freight containers irrespective of whether they are loaded, empty, refrigerated or carrying dangerous goods. The description of the container and its contents should be provided to the extent known and practicable.

3. Reporting obligations under SOLAS Regulation V/31

3.1 Loss of freight container(s): The Master of every ship involved in the loss of freight container(s) shall communicate the particulars of the incident, by appropriate means, without delay and to the fullest extent possible, to:

a) ships in the vicinity;
b) the nearest coastal State; and
c) the ship's Flag State (DG-(P&S), for Pakistani-flagged ships).

3.2 Observation of drifting freight container(s): The Master of every ship observing freight container(s) drifting at sea shall communicate the particulars, by appropriate means, without delay and to the fullest extent possible, to ships in the vicinity and the nearest coastal State.

3.3 Ship abandoned or unable to report: Where the ship has been abandoned or is unable to make the required report, the Company, as defined in SOLAS Regulation IX/1.2, shall, to the fullest extent possible, assume the reporting obligations.

3.4 Flag State reporting: Upon receipt of a report concerning loss of freight container(s) from a Pakistani-flagged ship, DG-(P&S), as the Flag State Administration, will undertake the applicable report to IMO through the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS). This does not relieve the Master or Company of their immediate reporting obligations.

4. Information required under SOLAS Regulation V/32

4.1 Loss of freight container(s): The initial danger message shall contain, to the extent available, the following information:

a) Report type: "LOSS OF FREIGHT CONTAINER(S) FROM A SHIP";
b) date and time of the incident in UTC;
c) ship's identity: name, IMO number, call sign and MMSI, as available;
d) reporting person: Master or contact details of the representative reporting on the Master's behalf;
e) addressees: nearest coastal State where the incident occurred and the Flag State;
f) message number, in chronological sequence where follow-up messages are transmitted;
g) position of the ship at the time the container(s) were lost, in latitude and longitude, or true bearing and distance in nautical miles from a clearly identified landmark, where possible. If that position is unknown, provide the estimated position; if this cannot be determined, provide the ship's position when the loss was discovered;
h) total number or estimated number of freight container(s) lost;
i) type of goods in the container(s), including whether dangerous goods are involved (YES/NO) and the UN number(s), if known;
j) description, as far as available and practicable, including container dimensions (e.g. 20 ft/40 ft), type(s) (e.g. reefer) and number or estimated number of empty containers.

4.2 The Master may additionally provide, where available and practicable: cargo description in accordance with the dangerous goods manifest; details of any cargo spill; wind direction and speed; sea-current direction and speed; estimated drift direction and speed of the lost containers; and sea state/wave height.

4.3 Verification and final report: At the earliest safe and practicable opportunity, a thorough inspection shall be conducted to verify the number of containers lost. A subsequent message stating the verified number shall be marked “FINAL” and sent to the same recipients. Any other subsequent or additional information shall be transmitted at the earliest opportunity after the initial report.

4.4 Observation of freight container(s) drifting at sea: The report shall include:

a) report type: “OBSERVATION OF FREIGHT CONTAINER(S) DRIFTING AT SEA”;
b) date and time of observation in UTC;
c) observing ship’s name, IMO number, call sign and MMSI, as available;
d) Master as reporting person and the nearest coastal State to the position of observation as addressee;
e) time, date and position of the observed container(s), in latitude and longitude or, where possible, true bearing and distance in nautical miles from a clearly identified landmark;
f) total number of containers observed.

4.5 Additional information for an observation report may include container dimensions and type, any cargo spill, wind direction and speed, sea-current direction and speed, estimated drift direction and speed, and sea state/wave height.

5. Immediate actions by the Master

5.1 Ensure the safety of the ship, crew and navigation; take appropriate precautions to avoid collision with containers and other hazards.

5.2 Transmit the initial report without delay using the fastest appropriate available means (e.g. GMDSS/ship-to-shore communications, coastal radio station, MRCC, JMICC & PMSA or other designated coastal-State reporting channel, emails). Do not delay the initial report merely because all information is not yet available.

5.3 Alert ships in the vicinity, as required by SOLAS V/31, and provide sufficient information to identify the hazard and its position.

5.4 Where dangerous goods are involved or suspected, provide the relevant information from the dangerous goods manifest, including UN number(s) where known, and report any spill or pollution risk. Make any separate report required under MARPOL Protocol I and applicable national procedures.

5.5 Preserve relevant records, including deck/cargo stowage plans, container manifest, dangerous goods manifest, bridge logbook, ECDIS/GNSS position data, weather and sea-state information, photographs and communications.

5.6 Notify the Company/DPA and Flag State promptly, and transmit follow-up information, including a verified final count, as soon as available.

6. Responsibilities of Company, shipowner and ship manager

6.1 Ensure that the Master and bridge team are familiar with the amended SOLAS V/31 and V/32 requirements and that suitable reporting procedures are incorporated into the Safety Management System (SMS), where applicable.

6.2 Maintain effective arrangements for immediate shore-side support and reporting where the ship is abandoned or unable to report.

6.3 Ensure that cargo and dangerous-goods records are readily accessible and that relevant information is provided to the Master without delay.

6.4 Ensure that the Company's emergency response procedures address container loss, drifting-container sightings, follow-up reports and preservation of evidence.

7. Reporting to DGP&S / Pakistan coastal authorities

7.1 Masters of Pakistani-flagged ships shall report container-loss incidents to the nearest coastal State and to DG-(P&S)as Flag State, without delay. Reports of drifting containers shall be sent to the nearest coastal State, with a copy to DG-(P&S) where practicable and appropriate.

7.2 For incidents occurring in or posing a hazard to Pakistan's maritime zones, the Master/Company should immediately notify the nearest competent coastal authority/MRCC/JMICC/PMSA through the currently designated national maritime distress and safety communication channels. The shipowner/Company shall also transmit the report to DG-(P&S) through the official contact channel dg@dgps.gov.pk notified by the Administration.

7.3 Reporting Arrangements and Communication Channels

The Master shall ensure that the required danger message is transmitted without delay through the appropriate available ship-to-shore communication facilities, including GMDSS, the nearest Coastal Radio Station or Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), as applicable. A copy of the report shall also be forwarded to the Directorate General Ports & Shipping DG-(P&S), Karachi, as the Flag State Administration for Pakistani-flagged ships, through the official communication channel notified by DG-(P&S). dg@dgps.gov.pk .

The unavailability of a particular communication channel or contact detail shall not relieve the Master or Company of the obligation to report the incident without delay in accordance with SOLAS Chapter V, Regulations 31 and 32.

8. Compliance and implementation

8.1 All owners, operators, managers, Masters and Recognized Organizations are requested to bring this Circular to the attention of their ships and relevant personnel and ensure immediate compliance with the amendments which are in force from 01 January 2026.

8.2 Recognized Organizations are requested to draw the attention of their clients to the requirements during applicable statutory surveys, audits and other relevant engagements, within the scope of their authorization.

8.3 Failure to comply with applicable international and national requirements may result in action in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations. This Circular is intended to communicate the international requirements and does not create exemptions from any other reporting obligation.

8.4 This Circular shall be read together with the applicable provisions of SOLAS, MARPOL, the IMDG Code and other relevant instruments, as amended.

9. Specimen danger message — container(s) lost

REPORT TYPE: LOSS OF FREIGHT CONTAINER(S) FROM A SHIP
DATE/TIME (UTC): [DD/MM/YYYY – HHMM UTC]
SHIP: [Name] | IMO No.: [ ] | Call Sign: [ ] | MMSI: [ ]
FROM: Master / authorised representative [contact details]
TO: Nearest Coastal State [authority/channel]; Flag State [DGP&S]
MESSAGE No.: [Initial / sequential number]
POSITION OF LOSS: [Lat/Long]; or [estimated position]; or [position when loss discovered]
NUMBER LOST: [Actual / estimated number]
GOODS: [Description, if known]
DANGEROUS GOODS: [YES/NO/UNKNOWN] | UN No(s): [if known]
CONTAINER DETAILS: [20 ft/40 ft; reefer/other; number of empty units, if known]
ADDITIONAL DETAILS: [Cargo spill; wind; current; drift direction/speed; sea state/wave height]
FOLLOW-UP: [Further information to follow / FINAL verified count]
END OF MESSAGE

10. Specimen danger message — drifting container(s) observed

REPORT TYPE: OBSERVATION OF FREIGHT CONTAINER(S) DRIFTING AT SEA
DATE/TIME OF OBSERVATION (UTC): [DD/MM/YYYY – HHMM UTC]
OBSERVING SHIP: [Name] | IMO No.: [ ] | Call Sign: [ ] | MMSI:[ ]
FROM: Master [contact details]
TO: Nearest Coastal State [authority/channel]
POSITION OF CONTAINER(S): [Lat/Long] or [true bearing and distance from landmark]
NUMBER OBSERVED: [number / estimate]
DESCRIPTION: [dimensions/type/colour/markings, if known]
ADDITIONAL DETAILS: [cargo spill; wind; current; drift direction/speed; sea state/wave height]
END OF MESSAGE

This Circular is issued with the Approval of the Competent Authority.



Capt. Rafaqat Hussain
Chief Nautical Surveyor
Directorate General Ports & Shipping Wing Karachi
Ministry of Maritime Affairs

Distribution:

1. The Director General, Ports & Shipping Wing, Karachi.
2. The Principal Officer, Mercantile Marine Department, Karachi.
3. The Chief Engineering & Ship Surveyor, (CESS)
4. Recognized Organizations authorized by the Administration.
5. The Chairman, Karachi Port Trust
6. Chairman Port Qasim Authority
7. Chairman Gwadar Port Authority.
8. The Chairman, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC), Karachi.
9. Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA)
10. Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC)
11. All Public and Private Maritime Training Institutes.