



## AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS ONBOARD SHIPS

### *Merchant Shipping Notice 198*

*Notice to Ship-owners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters, Owners' Representatives and Recognized Organizations*

The Directorate draws the attention of all concerned that, in light of recent industry studies and incident reviews, the critical life-saving role of Automated External defibrillators (AEDs) onboard ships has gained increased significance. While international regulations do not mandate the carriage of AEDs on ships, the safety and wellbeing of seafarers and passengers remain a priority.

It is noted that, a sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of unexpected death on board ships. Medical assistance at sea is inherently delayed due to distance from shore-based facilities. In such emergencies, survival rates can increase significantly when cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is combined with defibrillation within the first 3 to 5 minutes.

Technological advances have made AEDs straightforward to use, relatively low cost, requiring only basic training. AEDs assess the patient's condition and indicate when the shock should be administered.

It is strongly recommended that all passenger vessels and all other vessels sailing beyond GMDSS Sea Area A2, undertake a risk assessment, with external advice, if necessary, to determine if AEDs should be carried on board, taking into account, but not limited to;

- Sea Area in which vessel is certified to operate
- The length and frequency of voyages on fixed routes
- Number of persons carried onboard
- Average age of passengers and crew
- Presence of a ship's doctor onboard
- Operating in remote areas where emergency medical services are delayed.

Therefore, this Directorate recommends that Malta Flagged vessels shall be equipped with at least one AED which is suitable for marine conditions. The crew members shall also be well-familiar and trained in its use. When considering procurement and installation, please ensure:

- **Marine Suitability** – The AED should be rugged, water-resistant, and capable of withstanding shipboard environmental conditions.
- **Accessibility** – It should be placed in a clearly marked, easily accessible location.
- **Training** – Crew members should be familiar with AED operation, integrated into regular onboard first-aid drills.
- **Maintenance** – Regular checks of battery life, electrode pads, and functionality must be incorporated into planned maintenance schedules.

Shipowners, operators, and Masters of Maltese-registered ships are therefore strongly encouraged to give due consideration to the voluntary carriage of AEDs on board, which can significantly enhance emergency response and potentially save lives.

Merchant Shipping Directorate

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