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# The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)




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The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is one of the most important treaties in the field of international maritime law. Its objective is to establish essential safety standards for merchant ships in order to protect human life at sea. SOLAS regulates various aspects of ship construction, equipment, and operations, ensuring the safety of seafarers and passengers worldwide.

This treaty covers key areas such as fire protection, lifesaving systems, and navigation safety. Flag States are responsible for ensuring compliance with these standards on their ships, while port States have the authority to inspect foreign ships arriving at their ports to ensure they adhere to international standards.



## Historical Context

The first version of the convention was adopted in 1914 in response to the sinking of the Titanic, followed by revisions in 1929, 1948, and 1960. In 1974, a tacit acceptance procedure was introduced, allowing amendments to come into effect automatically unless objections are raised. Since then, the convention has been modified several times, and the current version, known as SOLAS 1974, has been adapted to address technological advancements and new challenges in navigation.

## Venezuela

Venezuela ratified the Convention on March 29, 1983, and it came into force for the country on June 29, 1983.




International convention for the safety of life at sea (SOLAS), 1974. (s/f). Imo.org. https://www.imo.org/en/about/conventions/pages/international-convention-for-the-safety-of-life-at-sea-(solas),-1974.aspx

# Key Safety Points

To ensure human life safety, the SOLAS Convention sets out clear standards in three fundamental areas:

- **Construction Requirements:** Ships must be designed to withstand adverse sea conditions and prevent structural failures. This includes specifications for hull integrity, watertight compartmentalization, and stability under various conditions.

- **Onboard Safety Equipment:** SOLAS mandates that ships carry lifesaving equipment such as lifeboats and rafts, life jackets, as well as fire protection systems, including fire extinguishers and detection and suppression systems.

- **Navigation Safety:** Ships must be equipped with advanced technologies such as radar, the Automatic Identification System (AIS), and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). These technologies enhance safety and emergency response.

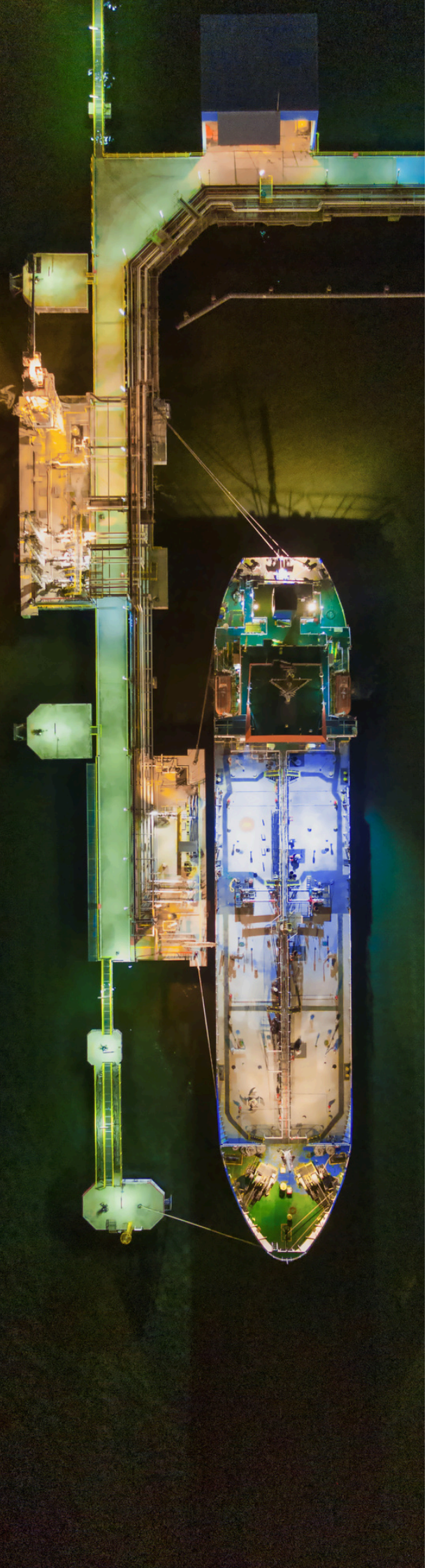




# Fulfillment of the SOLAS Convention

Fulfillment of the SOLAS Convention is a shared responsibility between flag States and port States. Flag States must ensure their ships meet all the treaty's requirements, conducting periodic inspections to verify compliance with regulations. Compliance certificates issued by the flag States must be kept onboard as proof that the standards are met.

Additionally, port States have the authority to inspect foreign ships visiting their ports, a process known as Port State Control (PSC). If a ship does not meet the standards, it may be detained until deficiencies are corrected. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) oversees the implementation of SOLAS and provides support to member States, promoting uniform and up-to-date application of the convention.



# Future of the SOLAS Convention

As the maritime industry advances, the SOLAS Convention must adapt to new challenges. Future amendments are expected to focus on improving cybersecurity to protect ship systems from cyberattacks, given the increasing reliance on digital technology. Measures to increase sustainability, such as reducing emissions and preventing marine pollution, will also be integrated. Furthermore, international cooperation will be strengthened, particularly to support developing countries in implementing SOLAS standards. The convention will continue to evolve to remain relevant and continue protecting human life at sea.

Understanding the basics of SOLAS: A comprehensive guide. (s/f). Marinesafetyconsultants.com. https://marinesafetyconsultants.com/understanding-the-basics-of-solas-a-comprehensive-guide/



In this regard, starting January 1, 2026, new international requirements under the SOLAS Convention will be implemented. One of the main changes will be the mandatory installation of electronic inclinometer devices on container ships and bulk carriers with a gross tonnage of 3,000 or more.

This measure, introduced by IMO Resolution MSC.532(107), aims to improve the monitoring of ship stability, particularly with respect to transverse movement or rolling. Electronic inclinometers will enable precise recording and visualization of these movements, contributing to safer and more efficient navigation. This amendment is an example of how SOLAS continues to adapt to emerging challenges in maritime safety.

Antonella. (2025, noviembre 6). *Cambios en el Convenio SOLAS: Nuevas exigencias para los buques desde 2026*. Pescare. https://pescare.com.ar/cambios-en-el-convenio-solas-nuevas-exigencias-para-los-buques-desde-2026/

The SOLAS Convention remains a cornerstone of international maritime safety, establishing key regulations that protect human life at sea. Through collaboration between flag States, port States, and organizations like the IMO, SOLAS ensures compliance with high safety standards in ship construction, operation, and equipment. As the maritime industry faces new challenges such as cybersecurity and sustainability, the convention adapts to remain relevant and effective. In this context, the commitment of all countries, including developing nations, is crucial to ensuring global maritime safety and protecting lives at sea.



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