



CIRCULAR NO.1-2026/MARITIME SAFETY

MARCH 2026

This Circular serves to provide regular information on maritime safety.

The Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (SIMA) Act 2018, the Shipping Act 1998 as amended and their subsidiary laws prescribe obligations, rights and standards for all registered vessels on any voyage and in any waters, and to every vessel in Solomon Islands waters to any vessel on which Solomon Islands seamen are employed.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SHIPPING OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

This Safety Circular is issued to inform all small craft owners, operators, Provincial Governments and the public of the implementation of the [Guidelines for the Safety and Operation of Small Crafts in Solomon Islands](#).

The **Guidelines establish a national safety framework for small craft less than 10 metres** in length and aim to reduce preventable marine incidents and improve safety at sea.

SIMA intends to make a maritime order to regulate the safety of small craft in collaboration with provinces. Mindful of the issues related to the operation of small craft of length less than 10 meters and not registered under the Shipping Act 1998 as amended, SIMA has issued and will implement the [Guidelines for the Safety and Operation of Small Crafts in Solomon Islands](#) in collaboration with provinces. Please contact SIMA at contact@sima.gov.sb and follow the public awareness campaign..

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE GUIDELINES?

APPLICATION AND KEY REQUIREMENTS OF SMALL CRAFT

All small craft must be licensed annually by SIMA and Provincial Governments and a small craft must undergo inspections at licensing and renewal. The licence number must be clearly marked on both sides of the hull.

Small crafts are now classified as:

- **Class A – Open Small Craft:** a small craft that does not have a fixed cabin or enclosed weather protection for persons on board.
- **Class B – Semi or Fully Enclosed Small Craft:** a small craft that is fitted with a fixed structure providing partial or full enclosure or weather protection for persons on board.

Operations are also classified by voyage:

- **"Sheltered Waters Voyage"** – a limited voyage, trade or operation of a small craft within inland waters and protected waters within 3 nautical miles (NM) of beaches or landings.
- **"Inshore voyage"** – a voyage, trade, or operation of a small craft within 30 nautical miles from the baselines of Solomon Islands.
- **"Near-coastal voyage"** – a voyage, trade, or operation of a ship within 200 nautical miles from the coast of any island and include a voyage, trade or operation in the high seas and waters subject to the jurisdiction of another State.

CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT OF SMALL CRAFT

All small crafts must:

- be **structurally sound**,
- have **adequate buoyancy and stability**, and
- be **suitable for their approved operational category**.

A small craft must be built so that, even if it fills with water, it can **stay afloat and stable with all passengers and cargo onboard** without tipping over or sinking, and this may be checked during inspection before licensing.

The Guidelines provides the requirements for the calculation of the maximum number of persons on a small craft. **Maximum number of persons must not be exceeded.** All passengers on open small craft must wear lifejackets when operating beyond 3 NM, or sea conditions deteriorate.

All small craft must carry minimum safety equipment including:

- one lifejacket per person on board,
- anchor with adequate rope,
- bailer or bucket,
- signal mirror,
- torch or waterproof light,
- paddle, and
- basic first aid kit.

Additional equipment is required depending on voyage type that allows reliable communication by radio and positioning.

Before departure, the skipper must check weather conditions, ensure sufficient fuel, water and supplies, ensure the small craft is not overloaded and inform a shore contact for longer voyages.

Skippers of small craft must be trained. Class A small craft skippers must complete a Small Craft Safety & Operation Course recognised by SIMA. Class B small craft operating at higher risk levels require certified competency under the STCW regulations.

CONTACT

All shipowners/operators are encouraged to provide feedback on this circular to the SIMA's Department of Shipping Operations and Safety to improve safety of all at sea, clean seas, and a vibrant maritime industry in Solomon Islands.

For anything related to maritime safety, please contact Jonah Mitau, Manager Shipping Operations and Safety at jonah.mitau@sima.gov.sb or visit SIMA's website at: <https://www.sima.gov.sb/>.