1. PURPOSE

To define the procedural steps for the safe and timely launching of the ships liferafts.

2. SCOPE

This procedure is primarily applicable to those crewmembers assigned to be in charge of an individual liferaft, but all crewmembers should be aware of these procedures.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

The primary responsibility for this procedure lies with the Chief Mate, who is in charge of training and drills. He will be assisted, as directed, by the Third Mate. The Third Mate is responsible for the maintenance of the liferaft equipment.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1. PREPARING THE LIFERAFT(S) FOR LAUNCHING

4.1.1. The side of the ship used for launching the rafts will be determined by the Master. The first raft launched will be the middle one (either #3 or #4), which lie directly under the davit hook.

4.1.2. Ensure that the painter line is secured to the ship. This condition should be in force at all times.

4.1.3. The raft container shells have securing lines, red in color, that can be made off to the deck to prevent the shell halves from falling into the water upon inflation, or perhaps more importantly, onto any rafts or personnel already waterborne.

4.1.4. Make off the raft bowsing lines to the deck cleats.

4.1.5. Undo the raft securing strap by tripping the pelican hook. This will also allow access to the cover of the raft lifting shackle.

4.1.6. Remove the lifting shackle arrangement from behind the cover.

4.1.7. Lower the davit lifting hook to the raft shackle and engage the hook. A leverage bar is attached to the hook lanyard to assist in the engagement of the hook.

4.2. LIFTING AND INFLATING THE RAFT

4.2.1. Using the handcrank, lift the raft off the cradle and swing it outboard.

4.2.2. Pull the painter line until the raft’s inflation system is triggered. The container
will open and the shells will hang on their securing lines.

4.2.3. The liferaft will fully inflate in less than 3 minutes.

4.3. EMBARKING PERSONNEL

4.3.1. Adjust the bowsing lines on the deck cleats to bring the raft tightly alongside the 01 Deck edge. Some davit adjustment may be needed to gain the proper height.

4.3.2. Embark the personnel and distribute the load evenly. Keep in mind that crowd control will be very important for everyone's safety.

4.3.3. The raft capacity is 25 persons.

4.4. LOWERING AND RELEASING THE RAFT(S)

4.4.1. When the raft is loaded to the satisfaction of the person in charge, he will order the release of the bowsing lines and signal the davit operator to lower away by easing off on the brake. If this is the last raft away, or no one is available, the bowsing lines could either be slipped or cut and the auxiliary brake release wire could be used by the person in charge from the raft entranceway.

4.4.2. (2) According to the release hook literature, the release lanyard should be pulled when the raft is close to the water. The weight of the raft still keeps the hook closed. When the hook becomes "unweighted", that is, when the raft is waterborne, spring pressure causes the hook to open and release the raft.

4.5. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.5.1. Only the first raft launched lies directly under the davit hook. For the other two rafts, procedures 4.1 and 4.2 will need to be modified. The rafts will need to be lifted off of their cradles and centered under the davit hook before the shell securing lines and the bowsing lines can be made off.

4.5.2. The Mess Attendant is assigned to bring (1) SART and (1) GMDSS emergency radio to the first raft launched.

4.5.3. The Second Mate is assigned to bring (1) GMDSS emergency radio and (1) EPIRB to the third raft launched.

4.5.4. In the event of an uncontrolled abandon ship or sinking, the rafts will deploy automatically using a hydrostatic release for the securing strap and a weak link on the raft painter line.
5. RECORDS

As per CFR 199.190 (d), the liferafts and their launching appliances will be visually inspected weekly. As per CFR 199.190 (e), a monthly inspection of the liferafts and their launching appliances will be made to make sure the equipment is complete and in good working order. The Third Mate shall be responsible for the documentation of these inspections and tests.

6. TRAINING

While there are dozens of CFR'S pertaining to training and abandon ship drills, two that stand out are: CFR 199.180 (d)(vii) "Abandon ship drills must include operating davits used for launching liferafts". CFR 199.180 (g)(5) "Onboard training in the use of davit launched liferafts must take place at intervals of not more than 4 months on each vessel with davit launched liferafts. Whenever practicable, this training must include the inflation and lowering of a liferaft. If this liferaft is a special liferaft intended for training purposes only and not part of the vessel's lifesaving equipment, this liferaft must be conspicuously marked".