

16 December 2016

UNOLS Research Vessel Safety Standards (RVSS-10th Ed.)
Appendix B- UNOLS Overboard Handling System Design Standards and Criteria for the
Design and Operation of Overboard Handling Systems
Effective: July 15, 2016

The Appendix B standard was incorporated into the UNOLS Research Vessel Safety Standards when the 10th edition was published in July 2015. The Appendix compliance date was established as July 15, 2016 to allow the UNOLS Operators to come into compliance. Over the past two years, the operators, with funding support from the federal agencies, have been striving to meet these requirements.

On November 30, 2016 at the UNOLS Council Meeting held in Arlington, VA, the UNOLS Office provided an update on the fleet progress in meeting these requirements. Based on the NSF ship inspection program results, it has been determined that as of Nov 30, 2016, the ships of the academic research fleet were not in full compliance with the Appendix B standard.

The UNOLS Council members, representatives from the federal funding agencies, and UNOLS member representatives openly discussed this and made the following points:

- The full compliance of Appendix B may not be reasonably attainable. There are an infinite number of over-boarding scenarios and towing angles that you would have to test for (as Appendix may imply), and it might not be possible to do this.
- The intent of RVSS standards is to create a safer environment and protect the owner. If standards cannot be practically attained, they create a dangerous legal environment.
- Backing away from Appendix B as currently written does not mean we are backing away from high safety standards; we did not create the Appendix B standard because of an unsafe condition.
- NSF cooperative agreements are expiring and new cooperative agreements will go into place in 2017. These new Cooperative Agreements may have language regarding that the vessels must be in full compliance with RVSS.
- It was suggested that we suspend the implementation of Appendix B as currently written. The UNOLS-RVOC Safety Committee should revise safety standards for overboard handling systems.

A motion was suggested for the UNOLS Council to consider that in light of the continuing effort to improve the over the side handling systems that the implementation of Appendix B as currently written be suspended and removed from RVSS, with further study to be done..

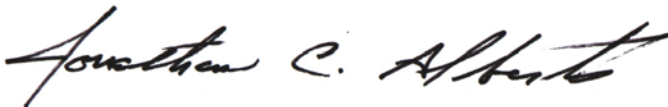
The UNOLS Council voted on this motion. It carried unanimously with no abstentions.

The UNOLS Safety Committee met via tele-conference on December 8th, 2016. It was decided (1) that the survey assessing the fleet's level of compliance should continue in order to determine the most problematic issues with the current Appendix B; (2) that based on the survey results, the safety committee should reconsider the objectives of Appendix B; and (3) that the RVOC Safety Committee should propose, with appropriate technical assistance, revisions to Appendix B.

Sincerely,



Dr. Chris Measures
UNOLS Immediate Past Chair



Jon Alberts
UNOLS Executive Secretary