MARITIME CODE MAY AFFECT MARINE FIRE OPERATIONS

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IN DECEMBER 2002, THE INTERNATIONAL SHIP AND Port Facility Security Code1 (ISPS) was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). During the 2004 Hampton Roads Marine Firefighting Symposium2, participants had their first encounter with the effects of this code. While on one of the many ship tours conducted by the symposium, it was observed that many of the doors and hatches that had been previously unsecured were now secured by a variety of methods. One group of trainees, led by a senior member of the ship’s crew, found themselves locked in an area of the ship, unable to egress to the main deck. The hatches that could be used for exit were secured from the outside. This was after the ship’s officer had requested the crew to ensure that all of the means of egress were unlocked.

This incident occurred during daylight hours with adequate lighting inside the compartment and in the presence of an experienced crew member who was able to guide the participants to another exit. What if this had happened during a fire in an area of zero visibility? After this incident, we began to think about how this code could affect firefighting efforts onboard ships and in port facilities.

HEIGHTENED SECURITY SINCE 9/11

Since September 11, 2001, there has been heightened awareness and increased security efforts not only in the United States but also in most other countries. The maritime industry transcends international boundaries. Although the average person most likely would see and experience the heightened aviation security, the maritime industry has also adopted stringent security regulations. It has been reported that “many foreign analysts believe that in all likelihood international terrorism will focus its subversive activities at the present time and in the near future on more accessible maritime targets, including ocean-going transport and passenger vessels.”

The ISPS applies to the following types of ships engaged in international voyages as well as the port facilities noted:

• Passenger ships including high-speed passenger craft.
• Cargo ships including high-speed craft of 500 and higher gross tonnage.
• Mobile offshore drilling units.
• Port facilities serving such ships engaged in international voyages.

Governments may extend provisions of the code to other facilities not meeting the above criteria. Military ships are exempt from the code’s provisions.

As part of the responsibilities of both the port and shipping company, a port facility security plan (PFSP) and a ship security plan (SSP) are developed after a security assessment has been made. In addition, a port facility security officer (PFSO) and a ship security officer (SSO) are appointed by their respective organizations. The PFSO and the SSO will maintain the port facility and ship security plans, respectively.

LEVELS OF SECURITY

A government that is a party to the signing of the ISPS may set three levels of security:

• Security level 1—the level for which minimum appropriate protective security measures shall be maintained at all times.
• Security level 2—the level for which appropriate additional protective security measures shall be maintained for a time as a result of the heightened risk of a security incident.
• Security level 3—the level for which further specific protective measures shall be maintained for a limited time when a security incident is probable or imminent, although it may not be possible to identify the specific target.

Once a government has set a level, nothing prohibits a ship or a facility from maintaining a higher level. It should be noted that at a minimum, security level 1 is maintained at all times. At this mini-
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minimum-security level, the ship's crew takes certain security measures. Most of these measures involve controlling access to the ship, supervising the handling of cargo, and monitoring designated restricted areas. These restricted areas, as well as unattended areas, may be secured as directed in the ship's security plan by locking or other measures. This provision affects firefighters.

SECURITY CHALLENGES FOR FIREFIGHTERS

As noted previously, the group at the Hampton Roads Marine Firefighting Symposium had its egress blocked by a secured compartment door: A padlock and chain secured the door from the outside. Other doors were observed to have their dogs secured by short pieces of chain welded to the interior bulkhead. Many variations were used to secure doors and hatches. On some doors, standard locks were installed, but because of the construction of the door and its need to be watertight, traditional forcible entry might be ineffective.

We interviewed ship personnel to inquire how and when their ships were secured to comply with the ISPS code. There have been many variations to meet compliance. One method is to install combination locks on interior doors and regularly change the combination that controls the locks. Handles on hatches or doors may be removed so that a wrench is needed to open the dog. The wrenches to open these hatches or doors may or may not be readily available. Remember, not all ships will have the same areas secured, and not all ships will use the same methods of securing the compartments. Many ship companies realize the need for emergency egress from compartments or areas in case of fire and have addressed this within their security plans, but many have not.

In the case of ports, certain conditions must be met with regard to security at the various levels established. At the very least, fire departments should realize that areas and access points previously accessible may now be locked or closed permanently. At a recent drill, the fire department attempted to access an area of an industrial facility indicated in its preincident plan.

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only to find that this access point was permanently closed because of heightened security; this caused considerable response delays.

PREPLANNING FOR MARITIME INCIDENTS

How can fire departments prepare to effectively deal with an incident onboard an ISPS-compliant ship or port? The following are some of the areas that should be addressed:

• Meet with port representatives, including the port facility security officer, and discuss the port facility security plan. In many instances, only limited information will be divulged because of security concerns, but specifically ask about fire department access.

(1) A door showing a hasp used to attach a padlock. A bolt cutter or other forcible entry tool will be necessary if a padlock is in place. (Photo courtesy of the Hampton Roads Marine Firefighting Symposium.)

(2) The handles were removed from this hatch, necessitating the use of a wrench to open it. (Photo courtesy of the Hampton Roads Marine Firefighting Symposium.)

(3) A combination lock for interior doors. (Photo by authors.)
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- Maintain a working relationship with the port facility security officer, and include the officer's contact information on your department's incident plans for the facility. During an incident, include this individual as one of your planning resources. Information contained in the security plan will be useful in developing strategy and tactics.
- Update incident plans with accurate information regarding access to the port facility. Remember, hastily placed fences or barriers may affect water-supply sources, such as hydrants. If these changes have been made, discuss them with the facility management.
- Meet with crews of the ships that enter your area and discuss additional security measures and how they may affect firefighting efforts. As noted above, this information may be limited, but establishing a dialog with the ship's master and security officer will enable you to gather as much information as possible. It is important that we remind the ship's crew that we are there to help.
- During a fire, take additional forcible entry tools onboard. They may include cutting torches, hydraulic spreaders, saws with metal cutting blades, through-the-lock tools such as the "K" tool, and standard forcible entry tools. On tankers, some areas may contain flammable vapors, so firefighters should consult with the ship's crew before creating an ignition source by using forcible entry tools.
- During a fire, additional rapid intervention teams may be needed. Also, dedicated companies may be needed to perform forcible entry at multiple locations onboard a ship that have been secured. This forcible entry may be necessary for ventilation, providing egress for firefighters who may have become lost or disoriented or for the rapid intervention team's entry.
- During a fire, include the ship security officer in early size-up discussions. Information about the ship's features and entrances that have been secured, and how, is critical for a successful operation.

With today's laws and regulations regarding security and their associated physical requirements pertaining to facilities and modes of transportation, it stands to reason that fire department operations will be affected in some way. It is up to the fire service to understand this and to acquire the knowledge necessary to understand how our operations will be affected. We can do this only by observing conditions in our response districts, educating ourselves relative to the changes in laws and codes, incident planning with the inherent updating required, and developing dialog and relationships with industry and security personnel. Neglecting to do this will adversely affect our ability to effectively fight some fires. We must be ever vigilant to those changes made in our nation's security since September 2001.

References
2. The Hampton Roads Marine Firefighting Symposium is an annual event held to train land-based firefighters and other marine personnel in marine firefighting principles and practices. Further information can be obtained by e-mailing William Burket at wburket29@verizon.com.
4. A small metal fitting used to hold doors, hatch covers, manhole covers, etc. closed.