

SAFETY FLASH: 01/2026

DATE OF ISSUE: [01-Apr-2026]

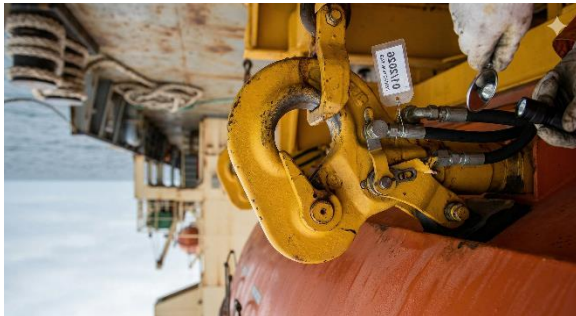
SUBJECT: Life-Saving Appliance Maintenance: Understanding the Scope of Inspection vs. OEM-Approved Servicing

1. SUMMARY:

This Safety Flash is issued following a review of current fleet practices regarding the inspection of critical Life-Saving Appliances (LSA). While advanced visual inspections are crucial, there appears to be a systemic confusion regarding the difference between a thorough check and mandatory Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM)-approved servicing. This alert highlights the need for precise documentation and authorization.

2. INCIDENT/OBSERVATION:

During a routine class survey on board [Insert Vessel Name if desired, or "a fleet vessel"], a technical advisor captured the following image while reviewing the LSA maintenance procedures:



What the image shows:

1. **Subject:** A heavy-duty, multi-link lifting and release hook mechanism (likely davit/lifeboat on-load release gear).
2. **Action:** A technician's gloved hand is using an inspection mirror to carefully examine the internal geometry, pins, and wear points. This demonstrates a high, professional standard of **detailed inspection**.
3. **Documentation:** A crucial, wire-attached inspection tag is clearly visible, reading:
 - o **INSPECTION TAG**
 - o **01/2026**

3. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS & CRITICAL FINDINGS:

While the visual inspection method is robust, VNW Marine advisors must clarify the technical definitions to ensure IACS and Flag State compliance:

- **The Correct Conclusion:** The inspection tag (01/2026) and the use of the mirror are **conclusive evidence of a diligent, detailed, and scheduled INSPECTION** of the physical components. It signifies that as of 01/2026, the components were checked.
- **The Common Misinterpretation (The Safety Risk):** It is a critical error to assume that this inspection tag *simultaneously serves as proof* that the preceding or ongoing **SERVICING** work was **OEM-approved** or certified.

In the marine industry, **OEM-Approved Servicing** is a specific, formal certification required for safety-critical gear (especially LSA on-load release systems under SOLAS III and IMO Resolution MSC.402(96)).

While the *inspector* is doing a professional job, the certification status of the *servicing work* done by a technician is not validated solely by a simple inspection date tag.

4. POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES:

Treating an inspection tag as definitive proof of authorized servicing introduces extreme risk:

1. **Operational Failure:** The most common cause of fatal lifeboat accidents is the unintentional activation or failure of on-load release gear that appeared sound but was incorrectly serviced.
 2. **Regulatory Non-Compliance:** IACS Class and Flag State inspectors will demand specific OEM-approved service certificates, not just inspection logs or dated tags. A lack of specific certification will result in major audit non-conformities or vessel detention.
 3. **Vetting/Insurance Invalidity:** Major vetting regimes and hull insurers now require granular confirmation of authorized service providers. A simple inspection tag does not fulfill this requirement, potentially invalidating insurance in the event of a catastrophic failure.
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5. MANDATORY RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION POINTS:

For Masters and Ship Management (DPA):

1. **Differentiate Certification:** Instruct all crew to immediately distinguish between "Inspection" documentation (logs, tags) and "Service" documentation (certificates).
2. **Verify Service Providers:** When safety-critical LSA (release gear, winches, davits) undergo annual or 5-yearly servicing, the Master or Chief Engineer must demand to see

the service technician's specific **OEM authorization card or letter** before allowing work to begin.

3. **Store Digital Records:** In line with digital auditing, the Designated Person Ashore (DPA) must ensure that the specific OEM Service Reports are scanned and stored alongside the inspection logs, allowing auditors to see *who* performed the service, not just *when* it was last inspected.
4. **Beyond the Tag:** The inspection tag seen here is the *start* of the audit trail, not the end. The certification (OEM certificate) is the conclusive document.