

## **CLASSIFICATION SOCIETIES – WHAT THEY DO AND DO NOT DO**

The mission of classification societies is to contribute to the development and implementation of technical standards for the protection of life, property and the environment.

Classification societies establish and apply technical requirements for the design, construction and survey of marine-related facilities, principally ships and offshore structures. These requirements are published as classification rules. Classification societies maintain significant research departments that participate in the on-going development of technical safety standards.

Classification rules are developed to contribute to the structural strength and integrity of essential parts of the ship's hull and its appendages, and the reliability and the function of the propulsion and steering systems, power generation and those other features and auxiliary systems which have been built into the ship in order to maintain essential services on board for the purpose of safe operation of the ship. In establishing its rules, a class society may also draw upon the advice of leading members of the industry who are considered expert in their field.

However, classification societies are not guarantors of safety of life or property at sea or the seaworthiness of a vessel because the classification society has no control over how a vessel is operated and maintained in between the periodic surveys which it conducts.

The owner of a ship that has been designed, built and tested in accordance with the appropriate rules of a class society may apply for a certificate of classification from that society. The society issues this certificate if it is verified, upon completion of relevant plan approval and surveys, that the ship complies with the rules.

All classification surveys are carried out by qualified surveyors using mainly visual inspection and sampling techniques. They do not consist of comprehensive verification or monitoring.

Should any defects that may affect class become apparent, or damage be sustained, the owner of the ship, or the shipyard when it is being built, is required to inform the society concerned without delay.

A ship is maintained in class provided that, in the opinion of the class society concerned:

- the ship has been presented for surveys in accordance with the classification rules;
- the surveys confirm that the condition of the hull, machinery, equipment and certain appliances remain in compliance with the applicable rules at the time of the survey.

A classification society does not design, build, own, operate, manage, maintain, repair, finance, insure or charter ships. Proper and effective construction depends upon the designer and shipbuilder doing their jobs properly. Safe operation and maintenance of a ship for its intended service depends principally upon the shipowner, the shipowner's representatives and the crew who operate, manage and maintain the ship on a day to day basis.

Classification societies may also act as Recognised Organisations for Flag States, verifying the same vessel's compliance with international and/or national statutory regulations.