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The International Laser Class Association (ILCA) is pleased to announce the release of a class-legal composite top mast section that is expected to be available for purchase in early 2017.

Because the new mast was designed with the exact same weight and bend characteristics as the existing aluminum upper sections, it will not provide a performance advantage but instead will eliminate the permanent bending problems associated with the aluminum spars.

"ILCA's policy regarding the introduction of new equipment is that it should always have the same characteristics as the existing equipment and that the new equipment should not give a performance advantage when raced alongside existing equipment," says ILCA Executive Secretary, Eric Faust. "The composite mast definitely meets that objective. It's been tested by some of the top Laser sailors in the world and they all agree that they can't determine any difference while sailing."

According to ILCA Technical Officer, Clive Humphris, "The new top section has been rigorously developed and tested over the past six years to assure that it is a 'like-for-like' part with the current mast. The advantage is that the new mast will be much more durable and won't be prone to permanent bending like the aluminum masts."

Because the composite mast is now a fully approved change to the Laser Construction Manual, there is no need for a change to the Laser Class Rules. As long as the mast is purchased from an approved Laser Builder or one of its authorized dealers, it will be legal for use at all ILCA sanctioned events.

The new mast specifications have been developed in close cooperation between the approved Laser Builders, World Sailing and ILCA. Because the composite top section is class legal and it will not provide any advantage in performance on the water, neither ILCA nor World Sailing anticipate that the use of the composite mast will need to be restricted for any future events. If it is subsequently determined that the use of the mast needs to be restricted, this will be controlled by Notice of Race on an event-by-event basis.