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SEAFARERS

Seafarers of
the world:
thank you

ISSUE 119:
SPRING 2020

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Signals

ISSUE 119:
SPRING 2020 /
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WELCOME

Back in January, we thought the big story of 2020 would be the fuel sulphur cap. We wondered what challenges would arise from the uncertainties on fuel supply, quality and how the new rules would be enforced around the world.

Fast forward to May, and not only is the story very different, but the landscape almost unrecognisable. The COVID-19 pandemic is not just impacting all parts of the maritime industry – it is affecting everyone's lives and some people's livelihoods. As cities and countries go into lockdown, a huge proportion of the population is forced into isolation and perhaps only now has a sense of what it takes to be a seafarer.

And it is the seafarer that we must thank. World trade keeps on going through these exceptional times; cargo keeps on moving and maritime services continue to support it. You are doing a remarkable job in difficult circumstances and for that we sincerely thank you.
#thankourseafarers

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Calling all crew!

Your feedback is invaluable and helps shape future editions of Signals. Seafarers, please share with us any thoughts or suggestions you may have by scanning the QR code to complete a short survey.



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North

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'Signals' is published by The North of England P&I Association Limited

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Photographs: Shutterstock.com and istock

HOW HAVE WE DONE?

Let us know what you think of the latest edition. Contact us at: signals@nepia.com

INSIGHT ARTICLES AND BACK ISSUES

Current articles, further information and back issues of Signals are available online at: www.nepia.com/latest/articles



BIMCO launches new sanctions clauses

Sanctions clauses for time and voyage charterparties launched

BIMCO has published new sanctions clauses for time and voyage charters, with a clause for the containerised trade to follow. Mark Church, who is on both drafting committees, explains the significance of the new clauses.

Recent years have seen an unprecedented use of sanctions against the shipping industry. The impact of violating sanctions can be catastrophic. One important element in any due diligence programme is ensuring that contracts contain clauses that minimise the risk of there being a sanctions issue and set out clearly the position if an issue does arise. When inconsistent or dated clauses are used, the parties may find they are of little assistance or there is uncertainty as to whether they have application.

There are several reasons why the new BIMCO time and voyage sanctions clauses are important.

Firstly, there was previously no BIMCO voyage charter sanctions clause. This led to parties amending (sometimes with unintended consequences) the time charter clause to try to make it apply in a voyage charter context.

Secondly, the new clauses replace both the *Sanctions Clause for Time Charter Parties 2010* and the *Designated Entities Clause for Charter Parties 2013*. When looking at any sanctions issue, it is helpful to consider the "what" and the "who"; both the activity and the parties involved. The previous BIMCO time charter clause focussed on the activity

and the Designated Entities clause dealt with party related risks. The new clauses combine both elements and therefore there is no need to include the 2010 or 2013 clauses in new contracts.

Thirdly, the sanctions clauses reflect the changes in the sanctions landscape and the risks (and the severity of those risks; note the rights of cancellation) that parties face in 2020.

It is hoped that these clauses, where adopted, will reduce both the number of disputes by removing subjectivity, spelling out clearly the remedies available, and, more importantly, reducing the risks of a party violating sanctions.

By Mark Church
Director (FD&D)

FIND OUT MORE

For more information visit
www.nepia.com/topics/sanctions



Supporting you at sea
For mental health and emotional wellbeing at sea call our confidential helpline: +44 191 235 3917 or visit: www.mindcall.org



Further Information
For more information and resources, please visit:
www.mymindmatters.club



Pre-Employment Medicals
For further details regarding our PEME programmes please contact Lucy Dixon or Abbie Rudd.
Email: PEME@nepia.com



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Post Repatriation Medical Scheme for Filipino Seafarers
For further details regarding our PRM programmes please contact Lucy Dixon or Abbie Rudd.
Email: PRM@nepia.com

Mud, mud, glorious mud... or is it?



The bulk cargoes bauxite and bauxite fines are both commonly-carried cargoes and their characteristics are generally well-known and understood by bulk carrier operators.



However, a bi-product from the bauxite refining process is now emerging as a cargo for shipment. This product is commonly referred to as red mud.

What is it good for?

Red mud is usually a low-quality product but there is reported demand from regions such as the Middle East and China. There are a number of laboratory and field trials of processes to extract components such as iron from this red mud.

It is understood that none of these have progressed to full industrial scale yet. This work is more advanced in China, where the cost of iron ore and new environmental constraints mean there is a drive for recovery.

It is generally stored in large and highly toxic tailings dams due to its limited uses and concerns over safe shipment.

The carriage of red mud cargo is a high-risk operation. It is known to be a highly variable cargo, and often very fine

Dangers to ship and crew

The carriage of red mud cargo is a high-risk operation. It is known to be a highly variable cargo, and often very fine. Furthermore, as well as being a potentially usable product it can also be carried as a waste product.

Red mud commonly contains a large proportion of fine particles less than 1mm in size and generally has a very high relative moisture content. Once on board, even an apparently stable cargo has been known to break down very quickly once the cargo is repeatedly stressed by exposure to wave energy. This is of particular concern for smaller bulk carriers on longer voyages.



Some versions of the cargo can resemble slurry, which results from a high concentration of super fine particles known as 'slimes'.

Experts have reported of vessels being unable to leave the anchorage directly after loading because of this cargo's adverse effect on the vessel's stability.

Once on board, should a problem occur then de-watering operations may be the only action possible to stabilise the cargo, which can prove costly and result in significant delays.

The cargo is highly caustic (high pH) making it corrosive to the vessel's steel hull as well as being hazardous to human health through contact with the skin.

How to carry?

Shipowners should be highly cautious of accepting a shipment of red mud - it should be considered a high-risk operation.

Red mud does not have a schedule in the IMSBC code and North is not aware of any plans for it to be included in the future, most likely due to the high variability of the cargo.

Therefore, red mud falls under section 1.3 of the IMSBC Code and should be carried accordingly.

In any event we recommend you seek expert advice prior to accepting a cargo of red mud.

AKA - Also Known As!

Shipowners and masters should be aware that red mud can be declared under numerous different names. Some of the primary brand names are:

- ARR (alumina refinery residues)
- BRR (bauxite refinery residue)
- Bauxsol
- NRM (neutralised red mud)
- NARR (neutralised alumina refinery residues)
- UNRM (un-neutralised red mud)
- CNRM (CO2 neutralised red mud)

Regardless of any branding, the risks remain the same.

With thanks to Roxburgh Group Limited for their assistance with this article.

By John Southam
Loss Prevention Executive

SureNav Member Benefit

To assist Members with their bridge team management, North P&I Club has partnered with SureNav to offer Members a 45% discount on a package of five remote navigational audits.



NEW LIMITED TIME OFFER!

The COVID-19 pandemic is showing us more than ever the value of remote services. We appreciate that some Members may not want to commit to the package of five audits, so until September 2020, SureNav are offering a 12% discount on a single audit trial.

Benefits of Remote Navigation Audits include:

- Five remote navigation audits, all conducted by experienced master mariners. Remote navigation audits use both the VDR data alongside supporting evidence such as copies of the charts used, checklists, log entries and voyage plans.
- Evaluation of compliance with procedures in the vessel's safety management system.
- The audits can be used at any time or on any of their vessels.
- A full report will be issued for each audit, complete with and any support material (video or sound files).

North's Members can sign up for the SureNav discounted package by contacting support@surenav.com



Giving you more

Don't forget to lash your equipment



When damage or an incident arises as a result of a shift of cargo or ship's equipment on board a car carrier, the shipowner is expected to be able to demonstrate that it exercised due diligence to make the ship seaworthy and took all reasonable steps to properly care for the cargo.

In recent years we have seen serious claims arise where cargo was properly stowed, but the ship's equipment - ranging from forklift trucks to deck handlers - received less attention. These items broke free while the ship was at sea.

Equipment on the loose

The consequences can be catastrophic. Cargo in the immediate vicinity may become damaged, and the impact of heavy moving objects can cause other cargo to break free, resulting in even more damage. The damage can also extend to the ship itself, such as deforming frames, penetrating the hull steel plating and rendering ramps out of service.

Losses can amount to millions of dollars, not to mention the risk to the safety of the crew.

Follow your manuals

The key document is the ship-specific Cargo Securing Manual (CSM). A CSM is a statutory requirement under the SOLAS Ch.VI Reg. 5. It must be approved by the administration of the contracting government (the ship's Flag State) and should be suitably endorsed to that effect.

The CSM should specify where and how to secure "cargo units, containers, vehicles and other entities", based on the different forces to which they may be subjected during adverse weather and sea conditions.

Although its title infers it relates only to cargo, the manual should also guide on the stowage and securing of ship's equipment. This is addressed in IMO Resolution A.489(XII) where it defines "other entities" to include loading equipment which belongs to the ship but are not fixed to the vessel.

The vessel's safety management system (SMS) should also provide sufficient guidance to the crew on stowage and securing techniques.

Take your time to get it right

The crew might feel there is commercial pressure to keep to sailing deadlines

following long and tiring cargo operations. When the pressure is on at the end to secure the ship's equipment as quickly as possible, this can be a recipe for mistakes. Make sure you get it right. Think:

- Are you familiar with how to lash the particular piece of equipment, the type of lashing to use and where to secure it on the ship?
- Are all the lashing points still in good condition, or have they been damaged during loading operations?
- If you are having to stow it in an unusual place, are you using enough lashings and securing to strong enough points on both the gear and the ship?

Don't be afraid to check, question or even call a halt if what you're being asked to do doesn't seem adequate or correct and you have concerns. A few moments checking could save time, money and even lives.

Proper securing of ship's equipment needs time and care.

By Adele Lathan
Senior Executive (Claims)

Eyes on the Tai Prize:

Judgment finds shipper not responsible for damage to cargo.



The UK High Court has rejected a novel argument put forward by a shipowner to hold the voyage charterer responsible for loading a damaged soya bean cargo.

The facts

In the *Tai Prize*, the ship was chartered to carry soya beans from Brazil to China. A clean bill of lading was issued. During discharge “charred” cargo was found and the head owner settled the resulting cargo claim by paying receivers. Noble, as disponent owner, reimbursed the head owner 50% of that sum under the Inter-Club Agreement (ICA). Nobel then sought an indemnity from the voyage charterer/shipper.

Arbitration

The arbitrator determined as a fact that the cargo had been loaded in a defective condition in that it was already heat damaged.

She also found that this damage was not visible to the Master, the crew or the stevedores during the loading operations, whereas she determined that the shipper/charterer could have observed the problem at or during the loading process due to discoloration.

The arbitrator rejected Noble’s argument that they could rely on a general implied right of indemnity of the type typically arising under a time charter.

However, the arbitrator did find the voyage charterer liable to indemnify Noble based on an implied warranty. The arbitrator said that it was “very well established” that, as a

matter of “entirely orthodox and correct” law, an owner who incurs a liability as a result of an inaccurate statement in a draft bill of lading presented for signature to the Master of a ship by a charterer or a shipper is entitled to recover an indemnity from that charterer so long as the Master did not have reasonable means of discovering the statement was inaccurate.

High Court judgment

The voyage charterer appealed the arbitrator’s decision to the High Court. The court reviewed a number of well-known legal authorities and leading textbooks, which all say that the obligation to record the apparent good order and condition of cargo in a bill of lading is owed by the carrier to the shipper and not the other way around.

A representation that goods have been loaded in apparent good order and condition is not a warranty, a term of the contract of carriage or a contractual guarantee, but it is merely a statement which a subsequent holder of a bill of lading may rely upon in a claim against a carrier as reflecting the reasonable judgment of a competent and observant Master as to the external appearance and condition of cargo upon loading.

The only warranty given by a shipper under the Hague and Hague Visby Rules is that any information it provides for inclusion in a bill of lading as to the “... leading marks necessary for identification of the goods [and] the number of packages or pieces or the quantity or weight” of goods is accurate. The shipper has no

obligation under the Hague and Hague Visby Rules to state the apparent good order and condition of the goods.

Therefore, the arbitrator was wrong to suggest a shipper warrants or guarantees that cargo is loaded in apparent good order and condition.

The Judge hearing the appeal did observe that putting the words “clean on board” in the box headed “shipper’s description” in the CONGENBILL form might arguably represent an express representation by the shippers that the goods were in apparent good order and condition prior to loading. However, that point was not argued before the arbitrator.

Implied indemnity

The second question considered by the Judge was whether there was an implied indemnity given by the voyage charterer in favour of Noble. But again, after reviewing a number of leading authorities, the Judge concluded that it would be wrong in principle to attempt to imply into a voyage charter contract a provision which makes the voyage charterer liable to indemnify a disponent owner when such rights are not found in the Hague and Hague Visby Rules.

Commentary on the judgment

Some reports have suggested that this decision reinforces the need for the Master to carefully check cargo during loading.

In fact, the arbitrator determined that the Master in this case could not have reasonably observed the pre-existing heat damage during loading operations.

What the case shows is that, in the absence of an express indemnity in the voyage charterparty, a voyage charterer or shipper bears no responsibility for inaccurately inserting the words “apparent good order and condition” into a draft Bill of Lading tendered for signature.

Owners continue to face hurdles in holding shippers or voyage charterers responsible for loading a cargo which is not fit to withstand the voyage due to inherent vice.

Permission to appeal has been granted so this is an area of law which will be reviewed by the Court of Appeal.

By David Richards
Director (Claims)

COVID-19



At the start of 2020, the big issue for the maritime industry was compliance with IMO fuel sulphur cap. Fast forward to Spring 2020 and one issue dominates everyone’s lives: COVID-19.

At time of writing, the total number of confirmed cases worldwide approached 3.5 million, resulting in over 200,000 reported deaths. The true figures are likely to be much greater. It has impacted the lives of almost everyone and this has naturally had an effect on shipping, both on the business and on seafarers.

Impact on the shipping industry

The pandemic has affected ship operations all around the world. The most obvious being the restrictions placed on vessels’ entries into ports by national governments or port authorities. As countries and cities go into lockdown in order to contain the spread, visiting vessels have been forced to remain in isolation – or “quarantine” – usually for 14 days since last port of call.

The lockdowns of each country impact the port infrastructures and the movement of cargoes. Internal transport and stevedore availability are often affected.

The closure of borders and airports make international travel virtually impossible. Crew changes are being postponed and shore leave prohibited, making this a stressful time for seafarers.

Helping our Members

We continue to provide you with information to help you continue to trade throughout the pandemic and to keep seafarers safe.

In addition to what you will find in this edition of Signals, here is a summary of some of our online resources:

MyGlobeView

MyGlobeView: Each country has taken measures to combat the outbreak and shipowners, charterers and ships’ crews need to know the latest news about specific ports. MyGlobeView is the ideal way to provide this information. By simply navigating the map and clicking on a country, information such as port entry requirements, quarantine arrangements and any restrictions on crew movement is at your fingertips. www.nepia.com/members-area/globeview



IG Dashboard: MyGlobeView has proven so successful in keeping our Members up to date with the latest COVID-19 news, that we, with Geollect, have been instrumental in developing a similar tool for the International Group (IG). The IG comprise thirteen P&I clubs which between them provide marine liability cover for approximately 90% of the world’s ocean-going tonnage. Although the P&I clubs may be competitors, these unprecedented times impel us to work together for the good of the shipping industry and – more importantly – the safety and welfare of the seafarers all around the world. www.igpandi.org/covid-19

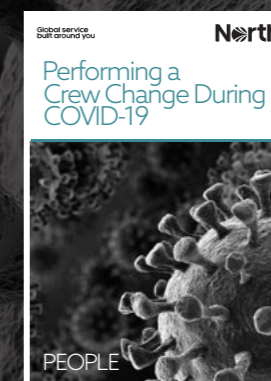
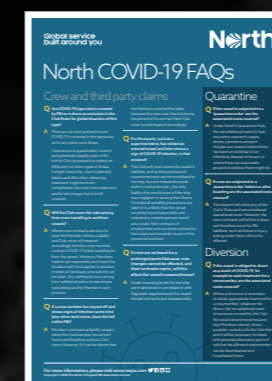
FAQs: A roundup of guidance from our experts at North on crew and third-party claims, quarantine, diversion, cargo issues and charterparties. www.nepia.com/latest/all-publications/covid-19

Performing a Crew Change: Practical guidance to help with carrying out crew changes in these difficult times and restrictive circumstances. www.nepia.com/latest/all-publications/covid-19

News articles: Reporting of topical issues and providing guidance on a number of coronavirus-related matters. We look at the problems with COVID-19 test kits, the risks of low-quality PPE, how scammers are taking advantage of the situation, and the approach of flag States and port State control authorities on inspections and certification.

FIND OUT MORE

Find all these and more at www.nepia.com/topics/covid-19-coronavirus/



TO READ MORE
SCAN HERE:

Dealing with ship visitors and social distancing



Protecting yourself and others throughout COVID-19.



COVID-19 spreads through small droplets from the nose or mouth



Wash your hands and make sure soap is available



Keep your guard up and ensure unauthorised personnel do not board the vessel



Keep your distance from others and avoid physical contact



Hold conversations on the open deck

COVID-19, which causes respiratory illness, is spread through small droplets from the nose or mouth of an infected person. These droplets may be inhaled or may land on objects and surfaces which other people touch, after which they touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

There are two main ways of protecting yourself from infection:

- To avoid inhalation, social distancing is advised – a distance of at least 1 metre is recommended by the WHO.
- Better hygiene, such as frequent and thorough hand washing, keeping contact surfaces clean, and less face-touching can help prevent picking up the infection via touching a surface.

Many ports have taken steps to reduce physical contact, but port officials, stevedores, bunker suppliers and other visitors will inevitably visit the ship. Here are some helpful hints on dealing with visitors and how to stay safe.

Preparing for visitors

- Wipe down with an anti-bacterial solution the areas where the visitor(s) will access and objects they are likely to touch (e.g. sanitise the bridge contact surfaces prior to pilot embarkation).

- Restrict access into the ship's accommodation – keeps doors locked and post signs warning of no entry.

- If you have alcohol hand gel on board, make it ready for use upon entry onto the ship and around the vessel.

- Where possible, have designated toilet and handwashing facilities for visitors – make sure they are well-stocked with soap.

- Try to prepare and complete any necessary documents digitally – avoid handling paper and laminated documents as far as possible.

- Have PPE readily available, such as disposable gloves, for use in unavoidable close contact situations.

Keep your guard up

- Maintain effective ship and gangway security and ensure unauthorised personnel do not board the vessel.

- If someone trying to board the vessel exhibits symptoms – refuse access and report it.

- Continue to sanitise contact areas throughout the vessel's stay in port.

Keep your distance

- No handshakes and no physical contact!
- Try to maintain your distance from visitors – official guidance on minimum distance varies from 1 metre (3 feet) to 2 metres (6 feet).

Take it outside

- Where possible, hold your conversations and meetings with visitors on the open deck or open bridge wings.
- If visitors must be inside, limit the number of crew in the vicinity to the absolute minimum.

By Alvin Forster

Loss Prevention Executive

COVID-19: The impact on crew



There are very few countries that have not been impacted by COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the Coronavirus. Likewise, there will be very few seafarers whose jobs and lives have not been affected by this pandemic.

The physical effects on the body are well-documented. Many of us might become infected without ever knowing, some will experience mild symptoms of fever, shortness of breath and a persistent cough, but serious cases can lead to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which can be fatal.

While many countries are on lockdown, shutting down all but essential services, ships continue to trade. Often forgotten, seafarers provide a vital service in these difficult and unprecedented times.

Therefore, we must not forget about the potential effects on a seafarer's mental health.

Effect on crew mental health

Seafarers are under pressure. Contract lengths are being extended as a result of most affected countries placing restrictions on crew changes and reduced flights. This is in addition to ports banning shore leave, leaving crew with the prospect of spending weeks, if not months, without being able to step foot off the ship.

It's not just the seafarer's life on board that is being affected. As the number of infection cases and deaths rise around the world, a crewmember might, very understandably, be worried about the health of his or her family back home.

Mind Matters

We recognise that the good mental health and wellbeing of seafarers is as important as their physical health, each often having an impact on the other. Our "Mind Matters" initiative was launched in 2018 and it's as important as ever.

Life at sea can be stressful. Long periods away from family, long hours, and limited social time. Add to that the sometimes-pressured work environment, bad news from home or a traumatic incident on-board and it's easy to see why seafarers can become stressed, anxious or depressed.

By Belinda Ward
Director (Claims)



My Mind Matters is a website available directly for the benefit of crew providing information and resources for the emotional welfare of seafarers and covers potential causes of mental health problems, how to keep well and where to get help. The top tips, articles and materials available will be regularly updated and added to.
www.mymindmatters.club



If you are feeling depressed, lonely or unhappy and would like someone to talk to, it can be difficult whilst at sea.

Mind Call is a free, confidential and dedicated emotional support helpline for seafarers on North entered vessels. The helpline is being provided to seafarers in partnership with seafarer's charity, ISWAN.

The helpline is available to contact 24 hours a day. 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

FOR MORE INFO
SCAN HERE:



The Mind Call team speaks Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Russian, Spanish and Tagalog as well as English and you can request a call back, use live chat or send an email instead.

Further details can be obtained at the Mind Call dedicated website: www.mindcall.org.

Protection from both COVID-19 and scammers

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has led to a massive increase in demand for testing kits and personal protective equipment (PPE). Where demand outstrips supply, the gap is often partly plugged by low quality or unreliable products and scammers.

Shipowners and seafarers should be aware of the risks when deciding on testing and PPE requirements and exercise caution when purchasing.

Test kits

Some countries have had great success in controlling the spread of COVID-19 by carrying out extensive testing. Furthermore, the recently released European Commission's "Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships" recommends to its Member States that seafarers should be tested before joining a vessel. Add this to the strict vessel isolation or "quarantine" requirements imposed by many ports prior to berthing, it might be tempting to purchase a test kit for the vessel. However, questions remain on the reliability and suitability of the test kits available.

There are two types of test. The **Virus test** (or swab test) checks for presence of the genetic signature coronavirus. This tells whether an individual currently has COVID-19. The **antibody test** looks for the body's immune response to the virus and can tell an individual if they have been previously exposed.

Rapid test-kits based on the antibody test are becoming increasingly available. However, there are concerns that allowing testing kits to be available on the free market will divert resources desperately needed for testing healthcare workers and those patients requiring hospitalisation. Also, some governments are currently advising against their use. For example, Public Health England warn:

- There is little information on the accuracy of the tests
- There is little information on how a patient's antibody response develops or changes during COVID-19 infection.
- It is not known whether either a positive or negative result is reliable
- There is no published evidence about the suitability of these tests for

diagnosing COVID-19 infection in a community setting

Clinics can provide virus tests, which in theory can produce a result within several hours. However, this is dependent on waiting times, so be aware that in some cases, crew have waited a number of days before receiving their test result and during this time they must remain in isolation.

Personal Protective Equipment

It is likely that we will see an increase in the wearing of face masks and disposable gloves as countries' lockdown measures are loosened. In some countries it may be a formal recommendation. But as things stand, keeping your distance from others remains your best defence in not only protecting yourself from COVID-19 but also to reduce the risk of passing it on to others. Wearing PPE does not mean you no longer have to practice social distancing. Keep your guard up.

Many of you have probably already received emails from companies offering deals on coronavirus PPE. The worldwide shortage of suitable PPE is clearly a potentially lucrative opportunity for some. It is important to be aware that some sellers could be:

- Scammers – the buyer pays for the goods, but they never arrive
- Providing sub-standard equipment which offer inadequate protection

ICC Warns of Scammers

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has warned of scammers exploiting the spread of the Coronavirus to carry out fraudulent activities and cyberthreats. The April 2020 edition of its IMB Commercial Crime International (CCI) Report highlights a number of attempts by fraudsters to exploit the current situation to their advantage. The UK's National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) advise that most reports relate to online selling scams – in particular hand sanitiser and face masks which are never received.

There has also been a rise in coronavirus-related phishing messages, sent from parties purporting to be health authorities, tax officials, news providers and those offering investment opportunities to take advantage of the pandemic. Our eagerness for the latest information on COVID-19, coupled with wanting to help health authorities in setting up schemes to help track the spread of the virus may make us momentarily drop our guard and click on a link in a fraudster's email or text message. Even more shocking are the reports from INTERPOL of fraudsters cold-calling and posing as hospitals or clinics demanding funds in order to treat loved ones or relatives.

Other scams include issuing of fraudulent invoices for medical testing services related to COVID-19, as reported by the International Transport Intermediaries Club (ITIC).

Keep your guard up!

While most of us are pulling together to support each other, remember that there are people out there seeking to profit from our fears and our desire to help.

Thanks to the ICC for allowing us to reproduce extracts from their article "Covid-19: Fraud reports soar as scammers exploit pandemic" in their April 2020 edition of 'Commercial Crime International (CCI) Report'.

By Alvin Forster
Loss Prevention Executive

FIND OUT MORE

You can find out more on protecting yourself from cyberthreats in our Cyber Security expertise area.
www.nepia.com/topics/cyber-security

New fuels and heat sensitive cargoes



The new fuels introduced to the bunker market have been found to be diverse. One particular characteristic can however prove troublesome if the vessel is carrying a heat-sensitive cargo.

Very-low-sulphur-fuel oils (VLSFO) is the umbrella term for marine fuels (other than marine gas oil) having a maximum sulphur content of 0.50%. Their popularity has increased rapidly since the introduction of the IMO global sulphur cap earlier this year.

Early experience shows that most VLSFOs are blended products and can vary quite remarkably. Some are very low viscosity, similar to distillate fuels whereas some closely resemble traditional high-viscosity heavy fuel oil products, with most somewhere in between.

The molecular structure of these new fuels also has an impact on its storage and use. Some of the new VLSFOs are paraffinic in nature whereas previously used heavy fuels were asphaltenic. Without going into the chemistry of fuels, these paraffinic VLSFOs are more prone to waxing.

The problem with wax

If wax begins to form in the ship's fuel storage tanks it will be very difficult to pump. Transfer pump filters and pipelines are likely to become choked. If the wax formation is extensive, the vessel's tank heating systems may struggle to re-liquefy the fuel. Manual digging of wax out from the tank might then be required, which is a costly and time-consuming exercise.

The key, quite simply, is to keep the fuel at a temperature above at which wax starts to form.

Finding the right temperature

Before VLSFOs hit the market, determining the cold flow properties of marine fuels was straightforward. Distillate fuels, such as marine gas oil (MGO), were tested to give its Cloud Point (CP) and Cold Filter Plugging Point (CFPP) temperatures, whereas residual fuels (e.g. RMG 380) were tested for Pour Point (PP).

However, the CP and CFPP only apply to distillates because they are clear in appearance. These tests do not work on opaque fuels such as VLSFOs. This leaves only the PP test, but because of its paraffinic content, there is a risk that wax can still form at temperatures higher than the traditional PP + 10°C 'rule of thumb' for heavy fuels.

An alternative means of measuring the cold-flow properties of a VLSFO is the wax appearance test (WAT). Developed by fuel analysis experts VPS, this test does not, however, form part of the suite of tests usually carried out on bunkered fuel under ISO 8217. This test cannot be carried out on board and must be specifically requested to the testing laboratory.



Credit: Innospec

Warm fuel, damaged cargo

Whatever the test method, the fuel analysis report provided to a vessel could recommend a relatively high fuel storage and transfer temperature to prevent waxing and solidification.

In such cases, there is a risk that the temperature of the fuel in tanks located adjacent to cargo holds could damage a heat-sensitive cargo. For example, according to BMT's Cargo Handbook, a bulk cargo of raw sugar is at risk of caking at temperatures as low as 25°C. If loaded into a hold which is above a hot double-bottom fuel tank, there is a real risk of cargo damage.

Good fuel management

Know your fuel:

A ship's chief engineer is not able to specify the cold-flow characteristics of a VLSFO when ordering bunkers. As the definition of a VLSFO is wide, it is very much a case of 'you get what you're given'. It is therefore essential that the shipboard engineers find out quickly the characteristics of the fuel soon after bunkering. This will allow them to store and handle the fuel at the right temperature and know the risks if the vessel subsequently loads a heat-sensitive cargo.

An analysis report that shows a fuel having a high paraffinic content might trigger the crew to transfer the fuel to other tanks that are not adjacent to cargo holds. But avoid commingling - paraffinic fuels can be very prone to incompatibility when mixed with other stems.

Fuel heating system maintenance:

It can be difficult to accurately control the steam heating of fuel storage tanks. Temperature sensors and steam control valves work in a harsh environment and can be vulnerable to falling out of calibration, if not failure. Good levels of maintenance can help prevent this.

Accurate record keeping

In the event of a claim or dispute, evidence is essential. A vessel presented with a cargo damage claim will be far better placed to successfully defend it if reliable fuel storage tank temperature records are kept.

By Alvin Forster
Loss Prevention Executive

FIND OUT MORE

Know your fuel – simple guidance on new fuels for ships' engineers
www.nepia.com/publications/2020-shorts-know-your-fuel
Visit our dedicated 2020 Vision web area: www.nepia.com/topics/2020-vision

Drug trafficking on ships



Drug trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar business with major consequences for those implicated

Ships are attractive to drug traffickers. Security is usually lighter than the airline industry and they travel the world. Smuggling by sea has been a problem for years, but in recent years there have been some high-profile cases and evidence that the methods used are constantly evolving.

A conservative estimate values the illicit drug trade at over US\$400 billion per year. In Colombia it's cheaper to produce cocaine than coffee per gram. Match this with a huge global dependency on drugs, then it presents a low-cost, high-risk and potentially high-reward business model.

The main players

The potential for high profits attracts major international criminal organisations and terrorists. Those at the top are not the ones transporting the illicit goods. So, who is?

Couriers and mules

If a vessel is being used to smuggle drugs, it is very plausible that the crew have no idea whatsoever that drugs are on board. In such cases, it is possible that port staff may be involved, such as a stevedore who has access to parts of the vessel and can move around without raising suspicion. Or smugglers can board the vessel (or attach drugs to the hull) from the seaside or at anchorage. There are numerous opportunities.

Targeting crew

Crew can be vulnerable. Professional traffickers have been known to target crew, either by befriending them during shore leave or taking advantage of any money worries they might have or indeed a drug addiction. Blackmail might also be a factor.

Crew are attractive to traffickers. They have specific access to suitable hiding places on board, for example tanks, enclosed spaces and storerooms. Machinery spaces are ideal for secreting illicit material. Even if the crew member is not the actual courier, they can facilitate the passage of drugs on and off the ship.

In some cases, a courier might not be aware of the presence of a 'minder', whose purpose is to ensure nothing prevents the courier from doing their job even if it means interrupting the operation of the ship.

BIG BUSTS



Over 1 ton of cocaine in a shipping container loaded in South America bound for Europe with an estimated street value of 66 million dollars.



In the last twelve months, at least four bulk carriers have been detained in Mexican ports when drugs have been found in cargo. The local authorities arrested crew, who may be held in high security prisons for long periods of time. Some of these vessels were detained for over six months.

Crewmembers need to look after each other to stop an individual falling into a position where they become vulnerable and therefore a target. Companies should have confidential reporting systems that crew can trust.

Ports and passages – new concerns

Over 90% of goods are transported globally by sea and constantly changing trading patterns between emerging and

developing countries create new opportunities to shift illicit goods.

Recent incidents have highlighted a notable increase in the finding of cocaine on vessels trading from Colombia to Mexico. One particular route is Barranquilla to Altamira. Another recent spike in incidents concerns the smuggling of cocaine from Ecuadorian ports. Drugs have also been found at discharge in ports in Turkey and Algeria.

Drugs are sometimes transported via indirect routes. As main routes become better policed, traffickers will select countries with weaker enforcement or corruptible officials.

In Colombia it's cheaper to produce cocaine than coffee per gram. Match this with a huge global dependency on drugs, then it presents a low-cost, high-risk and potentially high-reward business model.

Location of smuggled drugs

There are too many locations on board of vessels where drugs could be smuggled to list them all. But below we list some of the areas where drugs are commonly found:

Concealment in bulk cargo: packages are hidden within the stow of a bulk cargo, which could be a clean grain cargo or a dirty one such as coal or ore. Drugs have been found close to ladders within the hold.

Containers: Common methods include breaking into the container (and replacing the security seal afterwards) and secreting the drugs in the cargo within. Reefer containers are targeted because the technical space that houses the refrigeration equipment can prove to be a handy hiding place.

Ro-Ro: drugs can be hidden in the cargo of cars, freight vehicles, trailers or coaches.

Carry-on: Visitors or crew can simply walk on board and leave a package behind.

External: Drugs can be attached to the ship's hull. Typically, the rudder trunk and in some cases divers stash drugs on to the underwater area of the hull of a stationary vessel.

On the move: Speedboats are sometimes used to attach drugs to moving vessels.

Preventing drugs getting onto your vessel

Trading in certain parts of the world will put a vessel and its crew at risk of being victims of drug trafficking. There is no magic solution in stopping a determined trafficker. However, there are measures that can be taken to keep safe.

The measures employed by a shipowner and the crew depend on the risk. A voyage from certain South American countries to North America or Europe is clearly higher risk. However, there are plenty other drug routes around the globe and this check should be part of a vessel's voyage risk assessment.

Assessing the risk

- Check the level of port security. Secure fences, gates and lighting as well as CCTV and security patrols are just some of the important measures which need to be in place. If a port has poor security measures, the risk to the ship will increase. This requires close co-operation between the ship's security officer and the port security officer so that an increase in vessel security can be arranged.

- A strong security presence on the gangway is paramount. A vessel that looks like it takes security seriously is a less attractive proposition to a smuggler.

- Access points should be restricted and kept to a minimum. A single gangway under close watch is preferable. Pilot ladders should always be raised after use.

- The ISPS code states that an effective gangway watch is always required with a list of all crew and expected visitors. It's also very important to check the ID of any personnel embarking your vessel.

A strong security presence on the gangway is paramount. A vessel that looks like it takes security seriously is a less attractive proposition to a smuggler.

- Restricting access around the vessel and maintaining good lighting on deck are good effective measures. Locking doors that lead into the accommodation, storerooms and technical spaces removes an easy opportunity to hide packages.

- Locks, code-locks and other devices used to restrict entry should be regularly checked to ensure they are still working.

- Be aware that stores, spares and repaired or serviced equipment are another easy route for smuggling drugs.

- If CCTV is fitted on the vessel then make sure it works and covers the right areas.

- Monitor all around the vessel – including the sea side – for any suspicious behaviour or approaches. If a port has a history of smugglers attaching drugs below the waterline, periodically turn the engine.

- Searching a vessel for small packages of drugs is a huge undertaking for a small number of crew. But easily accessible areas can be checked before sailing.

- Encourage a strong security culture on board your vessel. Crew should be aware of the risks and know the importance of reporting suspicious activity. The more alert and secure crew appear to be then the more they may prevent drug smuggling happening on your vessel.

By Mark Smith

Loss Prevention Executive

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on Drug Smuggling – High Risk Routes visit www.nepia.com/industry-news/drug-smuggling-high-risk-routes/

Drill bits: Laundry fire



In the last edition of Signals, we launched our Drill Bits series with several suggested training exercises based around the response to an accommodation fire on board a ship. This time we are bringing all the 'drill bits' together with a full scenario-based POWER DRILL!



This full drill will allow you to pull together the various techniques practiced last time; use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), firefighting techniques, equipment testing, checking contingency plans and first aid.

Emergency: FIRE IN THE SHIP'S LAUNDRY



Preparation

Agree a time for the drill, preferably different to the last one and discuss the scenario. Take time to properly plan the drill and think about the following:

- Prepare the areas where exercises will take place:
 - Placing signs denoting fire location – tumble dryer in the laundry
 - Place signs denoting hot-spots - on bulkheads surrounding the laundry space
 - If you have an artificial smoke generator on board, set it up in the laundry area
 - If you don't have a smoke generator – post signs describing smoke conditions (light, thick, colour etc)
- Decide on who will be a casualty. You may want to have more than one. Make sure they are instructed not to show up at muster. If you have a dummy to act as a casualty, place it in the laundry.
- Decide how the drill will be initiated and by who (manual call point activation or smoke detector)
- Don't make access too easy – if the area is often obstructed, recreate those conditions



Raising the alarm

- 1 Bridge team announce "Alarms will be sounded for drill purposes"
- 2 Activate the laundry smoke detector – this will test the detector head and the alarm system.
- 3 Allow activation of the general alarm - the crew proceed to their muster stations
- 4 Bridge team announce – "For drill purposes there is a fire in the laundry, this is a drill"



Running the drill

At the muster stations:

Check all persons on board are present and correct and report to the bridge. In this instance, the second engineer has failed to show up.

On scene command:

Officer in charge (1 I/C) establishes forward control point, where the fire teams will reposition – for example the nearest accommodation entrance to the laundry.



Team roles and goals

Bridge Team:

Execute the relevant laundry fire contingency plan. Check that the fire plan and contingency plans are available and correct. Note any potential improvements that could be made.

Ensure that the whole bridge team know how to operate the GMDSS equipment. Send a GMDSS test call and log this in the GMDSS logbook.

Maintain accurate records of the event

Engine Room Team:

Check the fire main system is correctly set up (including any manual crossover valves to other systems) and start the fire pumps.

Shut down (or simulate) the ventilation fans to the affected zone or area that contains the laundry. Isolate the electrical supply to the laundry.

Ensure the team knows how to carry out these tasks. Remember to discuss how other areas might be affected by loss of electrical power or ventilation.



Fire Team 1:

SCBA team to don full firefighting equipment and conduct all pre-entry tests.

Set up enough fire hoses from the nearest hydrants for the SCBA team to enter with and reach the fire.

SCBA control board set up at the entry point. Record entry of the SCBA team into the space and use the board to monitor the time the team are on air. Maintain effective communications with on-scene commander.

SCBA team to pass through SCBA control and enter the space using all correct door entry techniques. Search for seat of fire using proper techniques and maintain communications as appropriate. If a casualty is found during entry, perform rescue. Simulate firefighting techniques to extinguish fire and knock down. Once extinguished, conduct search of the area to locate and extract casualty.

Fire Team 2:

SCBA team dons full fire equipment and conduct all tests to equipment in preparation to enter the laundry space if a second team is required – such as checking for reignition, damping down or continuing search for casualties.

Boundary Cooling - Ventilation Team:

Follow instructions on boundary cooling and ventilation requirements. Locate any manual vents for the laundry and simulate closure. Ensure the condition of the ventilators and closing mechanisms are in good condition and fully operational.

Set up hose lengths to simulate boundary cooling of the laundry area.



Hot Spots Team:

As instructed, check areas surrounding the laundry and its uptakes for hot spots and the potential spread of fire. Check for any combustible material in these spaces.

First Aid Team:

Gather stretcher and all relevant first aid equipment from the hospital, include burns treatment. When on scene, practise putting a casualty in the stretcher and first aid treatment.



The debrief

After the drill, everyone should help clear up, don't leave this to one crew member.

The debrief should involve everyone. Discuss:

- Did everyone know their role and responsibilities and did everyone do what was expected of them?
- What went well?
- What problems were encountered and how can these be addressed?
- Were any equipment or procedural defects noted?

If there are any lessons learned, don't waste them. Make sure they are recorded and put into practice.

By John Southam

Loss Prevention Executive

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on our Drill Bits series visit www.nepia.com/articles/this-is-a-drill

North in the news

You may have missed...



News



Sailor's Society appeal

North P&I Club is supporting Sailors' Society in their campaign to respond to seafarers needs during this pandemic. You can help support Sailors' Society too
<https://lnkd.in/ePT8xYi>

Join us in thanking seafarers for their contribution

North P&I Club Breaks 230M GT Barrier in 160th Anniversary Year

Following the conclusion of the 2020 renewal, early projections suggest that North P&I Club increased its total entered tonnage to over 230 million gross tonnes, further strengthening its position as a leading member of the International Group of P&I Clubs.

www.nepia.com/our-news/north-pi-club-breaks-the-230m-gt-barrier-in-160th-anniversary-year

North P&I Club Launches Interactive Information Portal for Members and Correspondents

North P&I Club has announced details of its new digital resource, MyGlobeView, which is an advanced, interactive geographical information portal, developed in partnership with innovative geospatial intelligence company – Geollect.

www.nepia.com/our-news/north-pi-club-launches-advanced-interactive-information-portal-for-members-and-correspondents

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