

14 May 1999

TO ALL MEMBERS

Dear Sirs

CALCIUM HYPOCHLORITE

Circular No 5:262 dated 9 December 1998 warned Members that stowage recommendations in the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code for the carriage of the hydrated form of this cargo may be unreliable, in that preliminary research undertaken following a serious fire in a container vessel indicated that the chemical may begin an uncontrolled reaction at a temperature considerably lower than 55°C.

Investigation work was continuing at that time, for the purpose of developing more reliable stowage recommendations. That work has not yet been completed.

In the meantime, there have been further serious fires in liner vessels and, although the causes are as yet unknown to the Association, it is believed that calcium hypochlorite was being carried in the affected holds. Whereas the original alert related to the hydrated version of the chemical (UN 2880), it now appears that other forms of the chemical may be involved in the continuing investigations.

Although there is insufficient information available to justify advising Members not to carry the chemical at all, the uncertainty does seem to warrant the implementation of a system which will ensure that it will only be carried after up to date advice has been obtained from experts familiar with the on-going investigations and research work. This will require the precise form of the chemical to be established first.

Bearing in mind that Charterers, Shippers and other bodies regulating the carriage of dangerous goods may not yet be aware of the newly perceived dangers, a reasonably fail-safe means of ensuring that a Member takes a conscious decision whether or not this chemical should be carried would be to add it to excluded cargo lists, so requiring Charterers and Shippers specifically to ask for the exclusions to be overridden. The chemical could be added to the lists in Charterparty excluded cargo clauses and chartering departments could add it to their lists of cargoes for which vessels or space are not to be fixed. Liner operators could list the chemical amongst the excluded cargoes communicated to departments soliciting cargo and to agencies. Ship Masters should receive instructions to inspect dangerous cargo lists for any references to this cargo which should then be reported to their Owners and Charterers.

The Association is endeavouring to follow the continuing research work and will inform Members when better advice is available.

Yours faithfully
A BILBROUGH & CO LTD
(MANAGERS)