



Expert advice needed on calcium hypochlorite stowage

THE carriage of hazardous and/or dangerous goods on board oceangoing vessels calls for extreme vigilance on the part of all shipowners and charterers. Sometimes, however, an incident occurs which serves to underline the need for the shipping industry to continually monitor developments in this regard.

At least one recent casualty has raised doubts about the recommendations contained in the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code in respect of the stowage of shipments of calcium hypochlorite (hydrated).

At page 5138, the IMDG code indicates that the cargo should be stowed away from sources of heat where temperatures in excess of 55 degrees centigrade will be encountered for a period of 24 hours or more.

Preliminary research undertaken following one recent casualty, however, indicates that this industrial



Don't let this happen to you

chemical may begin an uncontrolled reaction at temperatures considerably lower than this. It is believed that, under some environmental conditions, the critical temperature could even be reached within a vessel's holds, or on deck, if containers are exposed to direct sunlight.

Pending ongoing research, members should be aware that the IMDG code may be unreliable in this respect, and should seek advice from experts in this field before contracting to carry this cargo. The Club can be contacted for assistance, if required.

Misdelivery alert

CONFUSION persists in some quarters about shipowners' obligations in respect of discharge of cargo without production of a bill of lading.

There is a mistaken belief that an owner must not discharge without production of a bill of lading. But it is misdelivery which is the danger. If the bill of lading contract is on liner terms, and if the shipowner has been bound by that contract, then discharge does not constitute a delivery by that owner. In such circumstances, unless the shipowner controls the storage ashore and the ultimate delivery in exchange for a bill of lading, there is a risk. If the owner refuses to discharge the cargo, but is required to do so, it may be in breach of the charter party terms.

Misdelivery may prejudice Club cover. Members are warned, meanwhile, about the consequences of allowing charterers to bind them to bill of lading contracts which extend responsibility beyond the period during which the owner has control over the cargo.

Panama Canal observes strict vessel inspection procedures



Panama Canal inspections can be stringent and time-consuming

IN August last year, the Panama Canal Commission implemented an inspection programme for transiting vessels. Feedback recently received by the Club indicates just how stringent these inspections can be.

The programme is based on a number of different criteria, including age and/or type of vessel, the nature of the cargo being carried, and whether or not the vessel has had mechanical problems, for example, during previous transits.

The Canal Commission says inspections will not be scheduled if they will interfere with the transit of the vessel, unless the ship has had previous problems in the canal and has already been earmarked for inspection. Ships selected for inspection are not notified until after arrival.

The inspections involve the ship's safety equipment,

machinery fittings, fire-fighting systems and similar equipment. Vessels are expected to conform to internationally accepted standards, including ISM compliance where appropriate. If the result of the inspection is not satisfactory, an underway test may be required. Any vessel failing to conform to SOLAS will be required to bring equipment up to standard before being approved for transit.

It is understood that, from April this year, between twelve and sixteen vessel inspections are to be carried out each day. Members report that stringent tests are performed, typified by the requirement for twelve starts from the main engine with the compressors stopped, auxiliary engines load-tested to 700 kW, timing of rudder performance and anchor lifting, as well as checks of other pumps and equipment. The average duration of a typical inspection seems to be about three hours. Members should be aware of these requirements.

Gabon checks stepped up

HEALTH authorities in Gabon have stepped up vessel inspections at Port Gentil and Owendo (Libreville).

Medicine, food, drink and other products with expired validity dates are being destroyed. And their detection on board may be subject to the imposition of a penalty, although no details of such fines are currently available.

Members are asked to note this information in order to avoid their masters not having to contend with unusual and unpleasant surprises in Gabonese waters.

Y2K countdown

MEMBERS are reminded to ensure that their shore-based and onboard operations are fully millennium-compliant. Those in any doubt about the usage and wording of Y2K clauses, meanwhile, should contact the Club for advice immediately.

Caring for perishable cargoes

THE carriage of fruit and other perishable and time-sensitive cargoes calls for a high level of care on the part of shipowners. It also calls for great attention to detail when it comes to ensuring that the accompanying documentation is in order. Such documentation *e.g.*, deck and engine logs, reefer equipment log and reefer temperature electronic records, should be preserved.

In a recent incident, a Club member loaded a cargo of bananas at Guayaquil for discharge at four different ports. Overripe/damaged cargo was noted at the last three discharge ports, most significantly at the final one.

By the time the vessel started discharging, the bananas had already been on board for 43 days, well beyond the maximum transit time for this cargo. The owner's surveyor at the final discharge port concluded that "deterioration of the cargo condition occurred due to the long voyage duration and the cargo's inherent vice."

A cargo claim was submitted in the sum of \$364,353. Initially, the Club was



Great care is called for in both carriage and documentation

advised that there was no evidence to suggest that the vessel was at fault in connection with the carriage of the bananas. Rather, it appeared that the loss / damage in ripening was due to disease, maturity and the duration of the voyage.

The Club was advised that the owner appeared to have a strong defence to the claim. However, the lack of proper documentation was felt to be a serious problem, and one that made it difficult to be entirely confident that the claim would fail.

Subsequently, further documentation was provided by the shipowner which persuaded the expert engaged by the Club to conclude that the vessel was likely to be liable for the over-ripening of the bananas which, in his view, was caused by the carriage of the cargo at 0.3 degrees centigrade above the temperature which had been

stipulated in the carriage instructions. Although the claim was eventually settled for considerably less than the amount initially sought, the case illustrates the importance of ensuring that carriage instructions are properly observed for sensitive cargoes, and that the owner's records are in order and ready for examination at the appropriate time.

Stowaways reminder

THE previous issue of *StopLoss* highlighted the problems facing owners as a result of the increasing incidence of stowaways on board merchant vessels. Members should note that, in view of such events as those in the Balkans, they must be alert to the possibility of stowaways boarding their vessels in parts of the world where such activity was not previously encountered.

Maintenance and training must not be sacrificed

IN a depressed shipping market, with low freight rates and reduced earning potential, it is sometimes the case that the importance of the more routine, everyday procedures involved in running a ship can be overlooked. But there may be a heavy price to pay.

Relatively small amounts of money spent on regular shipboard maintenance by crews, such as painting and greasing, can save subsequent vast expenditure on shore-based or riding-squad repairs necessary to rectify defective structure and equipment because it has not been routinely protected. Additional costs can also arise if equipment such as cargo gear fails, causing damage and injury,

as the Club's experience amply verifies. Reports of up to seventy per cent wastage on cargo gear, for example, are very worrying. Still more costs can arise if port state control inspections



lead to detentions. This can cost the owner dearly, in terms of both delay and loss of business reputation. Charter party fixtures have been lost in just this way.

It should be remembered that preventative maintenance effectively limits operating costs, but does require the training of personnel involved. In this regard, members' attention is drawn to the International Shipping Federation Manning and Training Conference in London on September 8 this year, which is expected to include discussion about

the latest regulatory developments, including STCW 95, hours of work and international employment standards. Registration details are available from the ISF on +44 171 417 8844. The Club managers strongly support all forms of effective shipping training initiatives. Members requiring further details on worldwide training activities can contact the Loss Prevention Manager.

PSC feedback

WELCOME positive feedback has been received from members following the article in issue 12 of *StopLoss* about potential abuse of the port state control system.

Enquiries confirm that there is a lack of consultation between the various port state control regimes which can lead to vessels being inspected much more frequently than required. Thanks to input from members, these concerns have been communicated to the proper authorities. The situation will continue to be monitored, and any new developments reported.

PUBLISHED

on behalf of The London Steam-Ship Owners' Mutual Insurance Association by A. Bilbrough & Co Ltd, 50 Leman Street, London E1 8HQ, UK.
Tel: +44 (0) 171 772 8000.
Fax: +44 (0) 171 772 8200.
E-mail: comms@bilbrough.co.uk
Website: <http://www.lso.com>

EDITED BY

Chris Hewer,
Merlin Corporate Communications,
11 Kingsland Court, Three Bridges Road,
Crawley, RH10 1HL
Tel: +44 (0)1293 55 00 44
Fax: +44 (0)1293 55 04 04
E-mail: wizard@merlinco.com

PRINTED BY

Stuart Vaux Associates,
Chiltern Lodge, 38 Clifton Road,
Amersham, Buckinghamshire,
HP6 5PP, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1494 726593
Fax: +44 (0)1494 727380
E-mail: sales@stuartvaux.demon.co.uk