



## Cocoa beans in a sweat

**S**OME cargoes are notoriously difficult to carry by nature of their inherent properties. When those difficulties are compounded by improper stowage, it can



result in serious difficulties for the shipowner.

Such was the case recently with a cargo of cocoa beans in bags carried on a member's vessel from the Ivory Coast to Tallinn, Estonia. The vessel was a multipurpose general cargo/bulk carrier.

Upon arrival at the discharge port, the cargo receivers

claimed that 9,500 bags were damaged. Investigation by the Club's surveyor revealed that the main source of damage was wetness caused by ship's sweat forming under the vessel's hatchcovers and thereafter dropping back onto the cargo.

Wetting and mould growth in the wings of Nos 2, 3 and 4 holds had been caused by poor stowage, which prevented effective ventilation, and as a result of incorrect ventilation procedures employed by the chief officer.

It transpired that the charterers of the vessel instructed the master to stow the cargo with ventilation channels not exceeding 10cm. The accepted industry standard for ventilation of this type of cargo, meanwhile, is 30cm.

The cargo interests looked to mitigate the damages by disposing of the cargo in the Russian market, but the incident nevertheless resulted

in a substantial claim being made on the Club.

There are a number of important lessons to be learnt from this incident.

It is of course important that the suitability of a vessel to carry a particular cargo is determined before the fixture is actually made. And matters may also be aggravated where the cargo itself has a moisture content above the accepted industry level, which could result in moisture migration, thereby making the cargo unsuitable for carriage.

If the master and crew are in any doubt they should contact the Club's local correspondent for advice.

A lack of familiarity with the cargo to be carried and the method of stowage to be used can result in the issue of clean bills of lading where such are not justified.

Similarly, if the master and crew are not familiar with the cargo, advice should be sought from the Club regarding the optimum method of stowage.

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## Meeting the millennium deadline

**A** NEW millennium holds forth all manner of exciting prospects for businesses and individuals alike. But, as has been widely reported in the media recently, the year 2000 will also bring with it some major problems related to computer systems.

For the P&I clubs, the deadline for solving the so-called "millennium problem" is February 20th, 1999, because if clubs are not millennium-compliant by that time they may not be able to calculate rates for the 1999 renewal.

Having seen the danger early, the London Club has taken a proactive approach. This was reflected in the 1997 Report & Accounts which sets out the Club's strategy for the millennium problem.

Bilbroughs has taken the opportunity to work together with a leading London IT consultancy to create a computer system to replace its existing core business system, which has been in place since the early 1970s. It is expected that the new core system will be in operation by 1998. This will handle membership, calls and claims information and will

be fully integrated with a new accounting system.

The new system will bring numerous benefits to the management of the Club, including faster access to information, better tracking and analysis of claims, and better control of ongoing costs.

Bilbroughs has also obtained assurances from the Club's bankers that their systems will be millennium-compliant well in advance of the deadline.

The Club is confident that it has taken prudent steps to minimise its exposure to the millennium problem, and urges its members to make similar arrangements in good time.

### Collision course

SHIP collisions can often make for spectacular pictures, but P&I clubs can perhaps be forgiven for concentrating on their disastrous effects rather than their photographic potential. This spectacular photograph

shows what happened recently when a cargoship collided with a bulk carrier entered with the London P&I Club in the south-west pass of the Mississippi River in the United States. Liability has still to be agreed between the parties.



## Exceeding the limit

LIMITS are usually imposed for a good reason, but the Club's recent experience suggests they are being ignored in a number of cases, with resultant damage to cargo and vessels' cranes.

There have been a number of instances of damage as a result of stevedores and/or crew members overriding the

and of offhire claims as a result of time lost.

Officers and crew must exercise vigilance to ensure that limit switches are operating properly and are not being overridden.

In the event of irregularities, the vessel must make a protest and, if there is any danger to life, they must



cranes' limit switches. If limit switches are being overridden, or are simply not working, intolerable pressure can be placed on the crane jib and other parts of the structure. The potential consequences are extremely serious.

Apart from damage to the cranes themselves, there is the risk of damage to cargo

order cargo operations to be stopped.

The existence of a limit switch does not relieve the crane operator of responsibility to exercise due care and attention while operating the crane.

Members should contact Club correspondents if in any doubt about what action to take.

## Health warnings

VESSELS without proper crew documentation and operating with poor onboard sanitary conditions are in danger of incurring heavy fines when calling at Brazilian ports. Authorities in Brazil are imposing fines of up to \$2,000 per crew member in respect of documentary discrepancies.

The Club's correspondent in Brazil warns that shipowners should make sure, particularly, that all yellow fever vaccination certificates are valid. Ships face fines, and periods of quarantine of between six and ten days if they have come from endemic ports in Africa. Masters are also advised to check that there are no expired medicines on board their vessels.

- PERU has imposed strict new inspection procedures on vessels arriving from Chile, following the detection of the potentially lethal hanta virus in the Chilean port of Arica. Now, all ships arriving at Callao from Chilean ports must anchor in the bay and await inspection by International Maritime Health and Environment officials. If the presence of hanta virus is detected, vessels will be placed in quarantine, and appropriate measures thereafter taken.

## Condition of tug lines

IT is not unusual for tug lines to part. Thankfully, it is rare for this to give rise to a major incident, although records show that this does happen.

Members are reminded that there are standard procedures which should be followed when using the services of tugs.

It is important to ensure that the line used is in good condition. And it is generally considered that tug lines are safer than ships' lines, if for no other reason than the fact that the tug master should know his own line and want to keep it in one piece.

The Club's experience indicates that the following aspects are sometimes overlooked.

### When using tug lines:

- The officer in charge should inspect the line closely for general condition.
- Any doubts about the condition should be reported to the master.



- If necessary, the master should require the tugs to change lines.
- If an unsatisfactory line is offered and cannot be changed without endangering the ship, the master should report his concerns to the pilot/tugmaster, and a record should be kept of the details at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The line which is chosen should be in sound condition, and should be the best one available.
- The best line available may not be conveniently sited, but should be moved as required.
- If necessary, a new line should be broken out.

### When using ship lines:

- The officer in charge of the operation should instruct the crew as to which line to use.

Different methods of securing tugs' lines should not be used in an endeavour to compensate for their weakness. Safety is paramount.

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