STOPLOSS
BULLETIN

THE LONDON P&I CLUB

JANUARY 2010
ISSUE 53

Keeping charts up to date

The International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) requires that, "All ships should carry adequate and up-to-date charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, notices to mariners, tide tables, and all other nautical publications necessary for the intended voyage".

Yet, from time to time, the Club receives a report from a ship inspector that the charts or other nautical publications on an entered ship are out of date.Two incidents reviewed recently by the Club emphasise why compliance with the requirement is imperative.

In the first case, a telecommunications company alleged that a submarine cable had been damaged by a ship's anchor.

The first assumption was that, if the anchor had contacted the cable, then it must have been because it was dragging and the ship had not been able to recover the anchor in due time. However, the Club-appointed surveyor quickly established that the ship had, in fact, anchored directly over the cable but that the bridge team had been completely unaware of the hazard beneath them. The surveyor identified that the ship had used an old edition of the chart, which predated the laying of the cable. Apparently, on preparing the passage plan, the second officer had not checked that he had the current edition of the chart.

In the second case, the investigation into the circumstances in which a ship suffered damage as it struck a hazardous wreck confirmed that the current edition of the chart was in use but that it had not been properly corrected. A chart correction showing the wreck had been issued some three years previously.

Any member interested in obtaining details of refresher courses for their seafarers on chart and publication management is welcome to contact the Club for suggestions. Moreover, the UK Hydrographic Office publishes 'How to keep your Admiralty Charts Up-to-Date', which is a recommended read for ships using British Admiralty Charts.

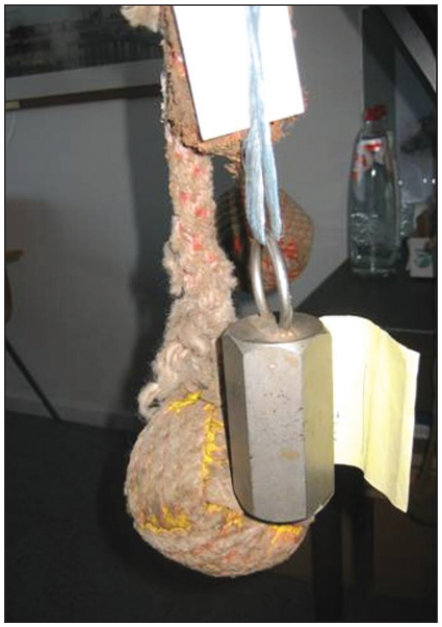
Poor passage planning

The Club's ship inspection programme occasionally identifies a passage plan that is little more than a list of waypoints entered into the ship's GPS. Our loss prevention efforts will continue to emphasise the need to follow best practice in this vital aspect of navigation, and the following example illustrates the risks that can arise from inadequate passage planning. A bulk carrier grounded heavily as it slowed to pick up a pilot while inward-bound to a discharge port. The ship was set off course by a strong cross-tide and struck a shoal that was clearly marked on the chart. Professional salvors refloated the ship but the grounding had caused it significant damage. The investigation into the many causative factors highlighted that the effect of tides and tidal streams was completely absent from the entire passage plan, which is contrary to the requirements of Chapter V of SOLAS.

That the ship would be set across the track should have been clear from the information provided in the tidal table printed on the chart. But the failure to allow for set was even more surprising given that the ship had been at anchor for several days and had to reposition after the strong tides caused the anchor to drag. Any member interested in training aids covering passage planning is welcome to contact the Club at stoploss@londonpandi.com for suggestions.

IN THIS ISSUE

Dangerous heaving lines



StopLoss would like to thank URS Towage & Salvage in Antwerp for highlighting a worrying practice of seafarers tying dangerous weights to heaving lines which they then throw to (or, perhaps, at) linesmen and tugs during mooring operations. The photograph above shows just one of the potentially lethal weights that URS employees have cut from ships' heaving lines in the past two years. Other examples include shackles and steel hooks.

The traditional method of adding weight to the end of a heaving line is a round knot known as a 'monkey's fist'. The UK Code of Safe Working Practice for Merchant Seamen states, "Vessels' heaving lines should be constructed with a 'monkey's fist' at one end. To prevent personal injury, the 'fist' should be made only with rope and should not contain added weighting material."Clearly, some seafarers find it easier to tie a weight onto a heaving line than to learn how to form a monkey's fist, but the proper technique is illustrated in the Admiralty Manual of Seamanship published by the Nautical Institute.

If, for any reason, an alternative to the recommended knot is being considered, a sensible option would be to use a quoit (rubber ring) as fitted to SOLAS-compliant rescue lines.

A good chandler will be able to provide spare quoits. In addition to the serious safety risk, members should be aware that URS reports that several ships have been fined for using dangerous heaving lines, and that Port State Control has been urged to take a greater interest.

In order to assist members' awareness of the issues, the Club's ship inspections now include a heaving line check as part of the assessment of mooring safety.

Beware Turkish pollution fines

StopLoss has previously highlighted industry concerns about the reasonableness of many of the fines for alleged pollution imposed under the Turkish Environment Code. Despite this, recent statistics show a sharp rise in the number of fines being imposed annually and the authorities have also recently increased the tariffs used to calculate the level of fines.

Under the code, any act which harms the environment is prohibited and any ship which is found to have caused environmental damage can be fined on a strict liability basis. A major concern is that Turkey is not a signatory to Annex IV of Marpol, which applies to the prevention of pollution by sewage from ships. As a result, the local correspondents report that many ships are fined because the overboard discharge from a Marpol-compliant sewage treatment plant is regarded as harmful pollution under the Turkish regulations. The most recently available statistics confirm that the vast majority of the fines relate to sewage discharges, but there are also reported cases of fines being imposed for the discharge of ballast water and run-off from deck washing.

There are further problems with the practical application of the code. Firstly, the Turkish authorities are often quick to determine that any incident, no matter how minor, has caused environmental damage. Secondly, having determined what type of pollution has occurred, the extent of any actual environmental damage is irrelevant to the penalty imposed. Instead, the fines are calculated by reference to the gross tonnage of the ship.

In many cases, agents in Turkey advise owners of problems that can be faced, but further details are also available at: stoploss@londonpandi.com

Assessing the risk of cargo lifting

The Club has recently reviewed two significant cargo damage claims which highlight the need to plan properly the lifting operations for heavy or unusual cargoes.

In one incident, a piece of machinery was to be loaded as an 'out of gauge' unit on a flat-rack container. A conventional spreader could not connect directly to the four corner-posts on the flat-rack because the top of the equipment was higher than the posts. A conventional method of lifting such a unit would be to connect the corner-posts to the spreader, using suitable wire strops and shackles. But, for reasons that are not clear, the shippers tried to load the container using a portable crane fitted with a cargo hook, rather than using a gantry crane fitted with a spreader. The stevedores rigged chains from each corner-post to a 'D' ring on the cargo hook. The container was not designed to be lifted from a central point. The corner-posts snapped as the container was being loaded and both the machinery and a hatch pontoon were damaged when the flat-rack dropped. Luckily, there were no injuries. In the second incident, the investigating surveyor reported that, unusually, suitable lifting wires were not supplied with a substantial item of project cargo. Moreover, the ship's staff did not develop a formal lifting plan prior to the attempted discharge. The lift appears to have been attempted using strops that were simply not fit for purpose. Fortunately, the wires parted more or less immediately and the cargo was not badly damaged by the short drop.

Both members are reviewing their Safety Management Systems so as to require a risk assessment prior to any unusual lifts and to ensure that ships' staff stop any lifting operation about which they have safety concerns.

Guidance on this topic is available in Chapters 1 and 21 of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's *Code of Safe Working Practice for Merchant Seamen,* which can be downloaded at www.cga.gov.uk/c4mca/coswp2009.pdf And the Club will be able to identify quickly suitable consultants should any member require operational assistance with an unusual lift.

Low-sulphur directive

From January 1, 2010, Council Directive 2005/33/EC requires EU member countries to ensure that ships within EU port limits consume only fuel oil with a sulphur content by mass of 0.1 per cent or less (ultra-low sulphur fuel). The requirement applies to ships berthed or at anchor, and very few exceptions - such as those for ships scheduled to be in port for under two hours - are permitted. Crew must be allowed sufficient time to complete necessary fuel changeover operations, and these should be effected as soon as possible after arrival and as late as possible before departure. There are widespread concerns about the availability of ultra-low-sulphur fuel in EU ports, and technical problems associated with fuel changeovers have also been identified. In particular, OCIMF, Intertanko and the ICS have highlighted problems that will arise given that many ships are fitted with boilers designed to burn HFO or IFO, ultra-low-sulphur grades of which are unlikely to be widely available. The ICS has pointed out that such boilers are unlikely to be able to switch between HFO/IFO and directive-compliant marine gas oil without class-approved modifications, and that the use of a distillate fuel in an unmodified boiler can create the risk of a furnace explosion.

The Club has highlighted this issue via the News Alerts service as articles are posted in the News section of www.londonpandi.com. Downloads available from that site include the EU's Frequently Asked Questions document and its Recommendations on what mitigating factors may be allowed when assessing non-compliance penalties.

THE LONDON P&I CLUB

From Our Correspondent

The fourth in a series looking at the work of London Club correspondents and the regions in which they operate

ANTONIO TALARICO
Ferpandi S.r.L
Genoa, Italy

Tell us about your background and the company you work for:

"Ferpandi was established in Genoa in the early 1980s to provide P&I clubs and their members with the highest levels of service. I am the Managing Director of Ferpandi and work closely with my colleagues Fabrizio Pescaglia, Stefano Galliano and Massimiliano Bet. All are very well qualified and have extensive experience. Also, one or two more people are due to join the team in the near future. We operate in the local ports around Genoa and also have a combination of experts and offices in other key ports, including Monaco, the Tuscany and Lazio regions, Naples, and Taranto. We also have good contacts in all the Sardinian ports.

Tell us about the port of Genoa:

"Genoa is one of the biggest and busiest ports in Italy at the moment. In 2008 about 53 million tonnes of cargo was handled in Genoa. Genoa is not a specialist port, so we get all sorts of vessels calling there. There is a lot of container traffic, but we also see a huge number of ferries and cruise ships.

Tell us about the types of P&I work you see there:

"The types of ships are very varied. However, we have seen a reduction in the amount of work during the credit crisis, especially in respect of container ships. That said, we are still busy and there are unfortunately still casualties - just recently, several serious ones involving stevedores. The other thing about Genoa is that it is renowned for being a windy port. This particularly affects the biggest container and ro-ro ships. They often have difficulty manoeuvring, leading to cases involving contact with quays, fenders and cranes. Other busy ports include Leghorn and Piombino, Naples and Salerno. Taranto is very busy with exports of steel products and imports of coal, while Sardinia deals mainly with containers and petroleum products. In Monaco, meanwhile, most of the work involves cruise ships. In the time that we have been operating, we have built up a network of first-class experts. We try to deal only with experts whom we really know and really trust. This means people who know the P&I clubs well and who work in the interests of the ship, rather than the port authorities.

Do you have any loss prevention advice for owners; is there one 'golden rule'?

"The key thing is, if you have any doubts at all, call us. We are contactable 24 hours a day and pride ourselves on being very flexible as correspondents.

Tell us about your work with The London P&I Club:

"We have always found that everyone who works for the Club is very competent and experienced. That includes people from all the offices, not just London. They are very professional, even in the most difficult cases. Over the years, most of our work has involved cargo matters. This has involved a wide spectrum of claims, including collisions, damage to fixed and floating objects, personal injury and - occasionally - stowaways. We have also had pollution incidents because the thing about Italy is that it is almost in the middle of the sea! Often, the pollution may occur out at sea, but sooner or later it washes up on our coasts. In fact one of the first cases in which I dealt with The London Club involved a pollution incident. We completed that one successfully, and it was a very positive experience. In our work it is important that we generate reciprocal trust with those we are working with, and we have always felt that The London P&I Club really appreciates the quality of our service and our local expertise. Such things are very important to a correspondent."

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) 20 7772 8000
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7772 8200
E-mail: stoploss@londonpandi.com
www.londonpandi.com

EDITED BY
Chris Hewer,
Merlin Corporate Communications,
5A Downview Road,
Worthing,
West Sussex BN11 4QR, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 190 350 2050
Fax: +44 (0) 190 350 0272
E-mail: wizard@merlinco.com

PRINTED BY
Stuart Vaux.
Chiltern Lodge,
38 Clifton Road,
Amersham,
Buckinghamshire
HP6 5PP, UK.
Tel: +44 (0) 1494 726593
E-mail: sbv@talktalk.net