

NORTH P&I CLUB ADVISES SHIPOWNERS TO TAKE SAFETY AND COMMERCIAL MEASURES TO REDUCE EBOLA RISKS

The 180 million GT, 'A' rated North P&I Club is advising shipowner Members to take great care to protect the health of their crew members when calling at ebola-affected ports in west Africa. In the latest issue of its loss prevention newsletter *Signals*, it also recommends that shipowners incorporate ebola-specific clauses in their charterparties.

According to head of loss prevention Tony Baker, 'Members trading or being requested to trade to an ebola-affected area must consider both the health and commercial risks very carefully. There are some simple measures which may be taken on board to help keep crew member safe, as well as steps Members can take to help protect themselves from the potential commercial consequences of the outbreak.'

North recommends a series of control measures that shipowners calling at affected ports may implement, including preventing shore leave and unauthorised access to the vessel, cancelling crew changeovers, banning the purchase of fresh food (particularly meat) and ensuring crew members are scrupulous with their hygiene and food preparation.

'A master whose vessel has visited an ebola area and who suspects a crew member may be infected should seek urgent medical advice,' says Baker. 'Where it is not possible to disembark crew members exhibiting ebola symptoms, it is recommended they are restricted to their cabin and have minimal contact with the rest of the crew for at least 21 days. Strict quarantine procedures will need to be put in place on board and masters should follow expert medical advice in such circumstances.'

North also recommends that shipowners entering into a new charterparty which will require their ship to call at ebola-affect ports should incorporate ebola-specific clauses that apportion risk between the charterer and owner. Without such clauses, the Club says shipowners risk being sued by charterers for refusing to visit what they consider to be an unsafe port or for delays incurred when a crew member falls ill with suspected ebola.

'The situation is less clear under existing charterparties and shipowners need to consider their position carefully,' says Baker. 'If the decision is taken to trade to an affected area, Members should develop a plan that takes into account World Health Organisation and industry advice and includes guidelines for the vessel to minimise the risk of infection and to deal with potentially infected crew members.'

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Notes to Editors

North, part of North Group, is a leading marine mutual liability insurer providing P&I, FD&D, war risks and ancillary insurance to 130 million GT of owned tonnage and 50 million GT of chartered tonnage. It is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK with regional offices in Greece, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. The Club is a leading member of the International Group of P&I Clubs (IG), with around 13% of the IG's owned tonnage. The 13 IG clubs provide liability cover for approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage and, as a member of the IG, North protects and promotes the interests of the international shipping industry. In February 2014 North completed a merger with Sunderland Marine, which operates within North Group as an independent regulated insurer guaranteed by North. Sunderland Marine is a leading insurer of fishing vessels, small craft and aquaculture risks. It is based in Durham with offices in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa and North America.