

NORTH P&I CLUB EXPLAINS HOW TO AVOID CLAIMS FOR SELF-COOKING SOYA BEANS

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North P&I Club has advised its members to be extra vigilant during loading and transport of soya beans to ensure they do not get blamed for cargoes that start ‘cooking’ at sea. The advice comes in the latest issue of its loss prevention newsletter *Signals*.

According to North’s loss prevention director Tony Baker, ‘We have recently experienced a number of high value claims in China associated with damage to soya beans exported from South America. The damage is caused by excessively warm or moist cargoes starting to self-heat, which leads to the cargo becoming mouldy, caked or discoloured.’

He says China Inspection and Quarantine may test any suspect cargo on arrival but the ship may not necessarily be aware of the results. A cargo damage claim may result with a threat of arrest unless security for a significant sum is provided.

‘Though the ship has done nothing to cause the damage, its negotiating position can be weak without detailed evidence from the load port and during the voyage,’ says deputy loss prevention director Colin Gillespie. ‘Good evidence will significantly strengthen this position.’

He says soya beans generally have a long shelf life provided they remain below 25°C and contain no more than 11.5% moisture. ‘The 40-day voyage between Brazil and China should not be a problem,’ says Gillespie. ‘If beans are loaded at 25–35°C and their moisture content is above 11.5% they will potentially start to self-heat after a period as short as 20 days – putting the ship at real commercial risk.’

North says recent cargoes of soya beans loaded in Brazil at over 30°C and with an average moisture content of 12.6% have self-heated. ‘In such situations it is vital for masters to have evidence of the loading conditions, ideally in the form of a load-port certificate of quality from the seller recording actual average moisture content,’ says Gillespie.

‘Masters should also consider taking their own samples for comparison, as well as a photographic record of the loading. In addition they need to keep temperature and ventilation records throughout the voyage. While ventilation has minimal effect on self-heating, accurate records will help avoid any suggestion that ventilation, or lack of it, was responsible for damaging an already unstable cargo.’

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Notes to editors

1. *Signals issue 104* is can be downloaded from North's website at www.nepia.com/signals
2. *North P&I Club* is a leading global marine insurer providing P&I, FD&D, war risks and ancillary insurance to 131 million GT of owned tonnage. North acquired Sunderland Marine in February 2014 and formed the North Group. Through Sunderland Marine, North is also a leading insurer of fishing vessels, small craft and aquaculture risks. The Standard and Poor's 'A' rated club is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK with regional offices in Greece, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore and Sunderland Marine offices worldwide. North is a leading member of the International Group of P&I Clubs (IG), with 11.5% 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. For further information visit: www.nepia.com