

NORTH P&I CLUB RENEWS LOSS-PREVENTION CAMPAIGN ON LIQUEFACTION RISKS

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The loss-prevention department of the 'A' rated 150 million GT North P&I Club has marked the start of 2012 with a renewed campaign to warn shipowners of the potentially lethal dangers of cargo liquefaction. The Club's latest issue of its loss-prevention newsletter *Signals* is accompanied by a new safety poster and information sheet on the topic.

'The loss of the bulk carrier *Vinalines Queen* on Christmas day and three bulk carriers a year earlier, with consequent loss of seafarers' lives, is a stark reminder of the catastrophic consequences that can arise from loading liquefiable cargoes,' says North's head of loss prevention Tony Baker.

'In reality there are very few ships that can safely carry a bulk cargo that can change from a solid to a liquid state. Until our knowledge of the behaviour of liquefied cargo and its impact on ship stability improves, shipowners and masters must take all proper precautions when presented with such a cargo for carriage.'

The International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes (IMSBC) Code, which became mandatory a year ago, identifies the steps that should be taken when carrying cargoes that can liquefy.

North has previously published comprehensive guidance and advice to its members on liquefaction risks including a 10-page loss-prevention briefing on the topic in March 2010, along with more specific briefings on carrying nickel ore and iron ore fines - the two cargoes apparently involved in the six liquefaction tragedies that have occurred during the last two years. Repeated warnings and recommendations have also appeared in its loss-prevention newsletter *Signals* and online *Industry News* pages.

The latest initiatives include a new A3 colour poster - the first in a new series of 'Cargo Wise' posters designed for use on members' ships - and an A4 'Hot-Spots' quick-reference, illustrated information sheet for ships' officers and shore-based managers.

Both provide reminders about the importance of not loading potentially liquefiable cargoes without a valid shipper's declaration together with supporting certificates of transportable moisture limit and moisture content. 'Can tests' should be performed throughout loading along with simple visual checks for any signs of splattering. If masters are in any doubt, North says they must stop loading and seek additional advice.

'Masters need to remember that the risk of liquefaction is a fundamental ship safety issue. As such they are fully backed by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea part V regulation 34, which sanctions any decision necessary in their professional judgement for safe navigation,' says Baker.

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