

NORTH P&I CLUBS WARNS SHIPOWNERS OF THE RISKS OF REDUCED GENERATOR CAPACITY

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North P&I Club is advising its members to be aware of the potentially severe consequences of poorly maintained or overloaded on-board generators being unable to meet the electrical demands of ships at sea. The warning comes in the latest issue of the club's loss prevention newsletter *Signals*.

According to deputy loss prevention director Colin Gillespie, 'Generators have a critical function to play on all ships. They provide electrical power for ever-more complex navigation, communication and safety systems as well as essential on-board services and vital equipment such as cranes, winches and bow thrusters. If the generators cannot cope due to poor condition or excess demand, it can lead to total loss of electrical power, putting the safety of the ship, crew and cargo at risk.'

North says insufficient generator maintenance is a common industry failing. 'People tend to think of generators in terms of their alternators, which have few moving parts and are quite robust. But the diesel engines that drive them need the same level of care as a ship's main propulsion engines. Components wear, turbochargers get dirty, compression drops and combustion deteriorates. A good monitoring and maintenance regime, including sufficient spare parts, is essential.'

Gillespie says the issue can be particularly acute on container ships where owners have increased the number of refrigerated containers carried without properly considering generator capacity. 'In such cases the generators, if not perfectly maintained, may be unable to meet the combined power demand from the reefer containers when both the bow thrusters and mooring winches are being used. This has resulted in generators becoming overloaded and tripping out, leading to potentially dangerous blackout situations.'

North says crews often attempt to pre-empt such blackouts by switching off one electrical system so another can be used. 'We have seen a number of incidents recently in which reefer boxes have been unplugged to allow sufficient electrical capacity for berthing operations. The containers typically remained off-power until the vessels were secured alongside or they were discharged ashore, often for several hours,' says Gillespie.

'High-value cargoes such as medical and pharmaceutical products can be very temperature-sensitive, and this practice can result in large claims against shipowners if containers are not kept at the correct temperature.'

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Note to editors

1. *Signals* issue 103, published in April 2016, is available for free download from North's website at <http://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. Through its guaranteed subsidiary 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.