



香港商船資訊 HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

An oil spill incident happened on board during bunkering operation

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Crew

Summary

An oil spill incident occurred on board a Marshall Islands registered container ship (*the vessel*) during the bunkering operation at the container terminal in Hong Kong (*the terminal*). During the incident, about 6 900 litres of fuel oil overflowed from a fuel oil tank of *the vessel*, with some fuel oil spilling into the sea from *the vessel's* main deck, resulting in serious oil pollution. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. *The vessel* arrived at *the terminal* from Mainland China for cargo handling. Shortly thereafter, a locally licensed oil carrier berthed alongside *the vessel's* port quarter to supply the bunker. The fuel oil tank no. 1 (port side) of *the vessel (the tank)*, with a maximum capacity of 219.94 cubic metres, was selected to load the bunker with an amount of 180 metric tons (tons). A week prior to the bunkering operation, the fuel supplier had agreed with *the vessel's* company to supply 250 tons to *the vessel*, but without knowing that the bunker fuel was reduced to 180 tons as requested by *the vessel's* chief engineer (C/E) with the agreement of *the vessel's* company.
2. About two hours after the bunkering operation commenced, the cargo officer of the fuel supplier (*the representative*) boarded *the vessel* from *the terminal* to sign the bunkering document. Upon realising that *the C/E* was unaware of 250 tons of fuel oil being delivered, *the representative* immediately requested *the C/E* to suspend the bunkering operation. Both *the representative* and *the C/E* went out of the accommodation area and found that fuel oil had been spilled onto the main deck along the port side. Some of the spilled oil entered the sea and spread on the sea surface, causing sea water pollution and contaminating the hulls of nearby vessels as well as the structure of *the terminal*.

3. The investigation revealed that the contributory factors of the incident were that the crew of *the vessel* failed to strictly adhere to the requirements of shipboard bunkering procedures, i.e. to verify the bunkering quantity before bunkering and closely monitor the bunkering progress on the site near *the tank*; the communication among all bunkering-related parties was ineffective; and the shipboard bunkering training for crew members was ineffective.

Lessons Learnt

4. In order to avoid recurrence of similar accidents in the future, ship management companies, all masters, officers and crew members should note the following items (a) to (c):

- (a) strictly adhere to the requirements of shipboard bunkering procedures to verify the bunkering quantity to be delivered before bunkering and closely monitor the bunkering progress on the site;
- (b) ensure effective communication among all bunkering-related parties for safe and smooth bunkering operation; and
- (c) ensure crew members receive effective training on bunkering operation.

5. The attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

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