

Carefully to Carry

SEPTEMBER 2006

Radioactive cargoes

If it is not 'excepted matter' then the consignment is not covered by P&I Club Rules and the consignor must arrange nuclear liability insurance and produce a certificate of financial security

The transport of radioactive materials is a well-regulated international activity and it may be surprising to many people to know that over ten million radioactive packages are transported around the world each year with up to four million of these by sea. Records show that radioactive material transport is a highly safe activity in terms of people and the environment. This is attributable to the regulatory standards to which the carriage is subject internationally and the careful application of them by industry and transporters. As with the transport of all hazardous materials the carrier places great reliance on the consignor to declare the materials correctly. In the case of the liability insurance there is the additional question of whether the consignment is or is not 'excepted matter'. If it is not 'excepted matter' then the consignment is NOT covered by P&I Club Rules and the consignor must arrange nuclear liability insurance and produce a certificate of financial security from his government before the consignment can be moved.

The following case involving an international shipment has highlighted the fact that, whilst Members may think they know that a certain shipment is probably 'excepted matter' they should always consult the Club for their nuclear consultant's confirmation.

Two consignments of uranium – one of uranium trioxide and one of uranium metal ingots – were shown on the Dangerous Goods Note as being "Radioactive Material, Low Specific Activity (LSA-11), N.O.S." and as being "fissile excepted". However the Dangerous Goods Note also showed that from the weights of uranium and of the U235 fissile isotope, the uranium trioxide was 5.55% fissile and the uranium ingots were 1.23% fissile. In each case the limit for the quantity involved to be fissile excepted was 1.0%. Upon the Member refusing these consignments, the consignor reverted with revised weights for the U235 fissile isotope which brought both consignments within the 1.0% limit. The Club's nuclear consultant was able to confirm that the revised figures were correct by obtaining the relevant data independently from the consignee (who he knew) by asking them what they were expecting to receive.



"The carrier shall properly and carefully load, handle, stow, carry, keep, care for and discharge the goods carried."

Hague Rules, Articles iii, Rule 2

Carefully to Carry Advisory Committee

This report was produced by the Carefully to Carry Committee – the UK P&I Club's advisory committee on cargo matters. The aim of the Carefully to Carry Committee is to reduce claims through contemporaneous advice to the Club's Members through the most efficient means available.

The committee was established in 1961 and has produced many articles on cargoes that cause claims and other cargo related issues such as hold washing, cargo securing, and ventilation.

The quality of advice given has established Carefully to Carry as a key source of guidance for shipowners and ships' officers. In addition, the articles have frequently been the source of expertise in negotiations over the settlement of claims and have also been relied on in court hearings.

In 2002 all articles were revised and published in book form as well as on disk. All articles are also available to Members on the Club website. Visit the Carefully to Carry section in the Loss Prevention area of the Club website www.ukpandi.com for more information, or contact the Loss Prevention Department.

In this case the outcome was satisfactory, but if the U235 fissile isotope weights in the first Dangerous Goods Note had been correct and the packages had been stowed on a vessel in the proximity of other fissile material, there would have been a real risk of a 'criticality excursion' (chain reaction).

The Association's Rule 5, Exclusion of Nuclear Risks, applies.