



L P Bulletin

Friday 1st February 2013

Bulletin 868 - 02/13 – Oil Pollution at Berth – Pointe Noire, Congo

We have been advised by the Club's correspondents of the following continuing issues with oil pollution at several berths at Pointe Noire, Congo

“The situation regarding oil pollution within the port of Pointe Noire has been well known for several months now (since September 2012) and the Port Authority is perfectly aware, but has yet to take measures to stem the leak.

Consequently this represents an obstacle to vessels calling at this port. We would recommend that all vessels intending to call at Pointe Noire, Congo should be advised of the prevailing situation and should charterers direct owners to this port, any clean-up consequences should be sought from the former.

The water and fenders in the port are polluted with oil due to a pipeline in the port having been struck during dredging operations as work was carried out on quays G1, G2, G3 and G4.

We regret to advise that there have been no signs of any improvement in Pointe Noire with regards to this oil contamination. As there has been no concrete action taken to clear the slick in the port, the quays G1, G2, G3, G4, D1, D2, D3, D4, P5, P6, P7 and P8 are contaminated. Vessels calling at the port continue to have their hulls contaminated to a lesser or greater extent depending on local conditions at the time.

With regard to any action to be taken, we would advise as follows:

1. The Master should issue a letter of protest and transmit it to his agent to have it signed by the Port Authorities (if the Harbor Master refuses to sign the LOP regarding this problem, the agent should do so).
2. Should it be necessary to prove that the oil pollution is not emanating from the vessel, oil samples should be collected from the water around the vessel. However, sometimes the port security refuses to allow this to be carried out as the Port Authorities do not want to draw further attention to the problem. We are not aware of any instances where the Port Authority has tried to shift the blame for the oil pollution onto the vessel.
3. If hull cleaning is required, it has to be carried out at anchor either by crew or a local company hired for the purpose. Whether or not hull cleaning is necessary is at the discretion of the Master/Owner bearing in mind the extent of the contamination and the vessel's itinerary etc. (Some vessels choose not to clean the hull, but rely on the natural cleaning of the sea water on the subsequent voyage depending on the extent of the contamination, anticipated length of voyage, next port, draft etc.) There are approximately four local cleaning companies who can be engaged via the agent to clean the vessel's hull.

4. It may be prudent to consider ensuring that the vessel has appropriately approved oil cleaning chemicals/solvents on board prior to the arrival at Pointe Noire as this may assist in keeping down and cleaning costs, especially if the cleaning can be carried out by the crew.”

Source of Information:

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