



Ship Type: Bulk Carrier

Trade Area: Worldwide

Bulletin 253 - 06/02 - Radioactive Scrap

Following recent incidents with cargoes loaded in the former USSR, the Peoples Republic of China and Egypt, the following guidance is issued to Members.

Scrap metal consignments from the above areas may be contaminated with radioactive material. Members are advised to obtain clear written statements from consignors in these areas that they have carried out a thorough survey and that the consignment does not contain such material. If a Member is unsure about the possible presence of radioactive contamination then a radiation survey should be requested before loading.

Members should be aware that in most countries the facilities which process scrap metal are fitted with sensitive radiation detectors and all incoming vehicles have to pass through these before the load is accepted.

There are also many ports which have fixed and mobile radiation detection equipment. It is therefore likely that any consignment that is radioactive will be detected after unloading from a vessel.

There are two principal sources of scrap metal which can give rise to radioactive contamination but it should be stressed that the levels of contamination are usually so low that they do not present a hazard to the ships crew.

Firstly scrap metal which has arisen from military facilities may contain traces of Tritium, Radium 226 and other isotopes which are used in military instruments. In addition pipework and metal which has been used in the nuclear power industry may become mildly radioactive due to the activation of Cobalt 60 in the steel as the result of radiation.

Secondly, pipework from oil well drilling has a tendency to concentrate the natural radioactivity which is present in seabed mud.

In both cases these scrap metals may be carried without hazard providing they are correctly declared, packed and labelled in accordance with IAEA Transport Regulations. At the low levels usually encountered, many of these consignments could be carried unpackaged and would not require labelling as long as there would be no escape of the radioactive contents from the conveyance during routine transport. If items such as pipework are being sent to a facility which cleans them and returns them to use, then clearly the consignment is not radioactive waste. If it falls within the definition of "Excepted Matter" it may be carried without affecting P&I Club cover.

However if such a consignment of radioactive material is waste for disposal it cannot be "Excepted Matter" and the exclusion of nuclear risks set out in Rule 5f will apply. In that case Members should check whether they are protected by a nuclear liability insurance arranged by the consignor.

If Members carry consignments of scrap metal they are advised to consider the purchase and use of a simple hand-held gamma radiation monitoring instrument if they have any doubt about the authenticity of the cargo declaration or the source of the material.

Source of Information: External through Loss Prevention Department