



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Worldwide

Bulletin 418 - 06/05 - Working Hours - Worldwide

This bulletin highlights a ship visit aboard a well maintained Member vessel where commercial pressure and minimum manning leading to fatigue made 'an accident waiting to happen'.

The ship was loading pet coke and the terminal had a fixed loading arm, which required the ship to "shift ship" at the end of every pour (approx every three hours). This involved most of the ship's staff. The ship was loading for 2.5 days and at the end of this period the "awareness" of the officers and crew onboard was at risk of being extremely low due to them being stressed and fatigued. At the time the UK Club's ship inspector came onboard the chief officer was very tired, having been involved with ballasting operations for over 24 hours. At the end of the loading period the chief officer was required to trim the ship to ensure that she was not overloaded both for sailing and for arrival at the destination port and he also had to maximise the cargo for freight purposes. A calculation error at this stage would have been very costly.

The master advised that pressure was exerted on him by the shore terminal staff to restrict the number of pours and to load each hatch to the full in a single pour. It is likely that the terminal staff were on a time related bonus incentive. They also advised the master that loading each hatch to the limit in one single pour was common practice on other ships that visited the port - so why couldn't his ship do it? The master was professional enough to resist such pressure.

The master included himself on watches and "stations/shifting ship" and had re-arranged watch schedules so that one officer and one crew member managed six hours rest before sailing. This was the best he could do given the disruption to the ship every three hours.

Loading a hatch in one single pour is both unprofessional and extremely dangerous; there is a high risk of the ship exceeding the 'in- port condition' sheer forces and bending moments, which could result in fractures and other damage to the ship's frames and bulkheads.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) Chief Inspector reiterated, in the recently published 2004 Year Report, his continuing concern regarding fatigue and safe manning issues. The Chief Inspector said with regard to the worrying number of ship collisions and near misses that the fundamentals behind these events, which remain depressingly consistent, included fatigued crews due to undermanning, a classic symptom of which is poor situational awareness/anticipation/judgement by officers of the watch.

In 2004 the MAIB conducted a safety study which showed conclusively that poor manning levels and fatigue were major casual factors in collisions and groundings. The main concern was dry cargo vessels on short sea trades with the master and mate being the only bridge watchkeepers onboard. Running the typical working hours of the master/mate working six hours about through a fatigue model, the MAIB produced a graph illustrating that beyond day 40 the mate was dangerously fatigued – and many of the days before that badly fatigued.

Source of information: Ship Inspection Department
UK P&I Club
www.ukpandi.com