



LP Bulletin

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Bulletin 765 - 05/11 - Fuel oil Quick Closing Valves - USA

Quick closing valves are an essential safety component in a vessels power plant. They cut off fuel supply to an engine in times of emergency. These valves ensure that an engine room fire remains small and controllable and have saved many vessels in the past. It is then regrettable that due to poor maintenance or wilful neglect that these valves are being used incorrectly.

Inspection

After recognising an increase in the number of deficiencies on inspected vessels the United States Coast Guard (USCG) has increased its vigilance in its inspection regime in this area.

The USCG had found numerous cases where Quick Closing Valves (QCV) were poorly maintained, modified in some way or intentionally blocked. The USCG is tasking a dim view in these circumstances and Members should expect their vessels to be rebuked either through the nomination of deficiencies or through fines. Also this may induce the USCG to closer scrutiny of the vessel.

Deficiencies

Intentionally blocked valves shows a wilful disregard to safety and is counter to any safety culture a company is trying to build.

Modified QCVs may be thought necessary due to a design fault or for ease of day to day work but this practice is also very dangerous. Secondly unless approved by class the system now falls outside statutory regulations. Some port state control authorities may use this fact to impose heavy fines on a vessel.

Poorly maintained QCVs are possibly the most dangerous kind due to their unpredictable operation. They are also a poor reflection of a vessel's maintenance standards and will likely result in a more probing inspection by the PSC.

The USCG are going one step further in requiring the crew to have a solid understanding of the fuel cut off system. Here we see the USCG testing the competence of the crew.

Operation

The safe and correct operation of these QCVs is essential as the consequences of these somewhat minor parts in the engine room can be catastrophic. In the case of a valve that is either held open by force or cannot close due to poor maintenance has the potential to feed fuel to an engineroom fire. This may lead to a loss of the engine plant or even a total loss of the vessel.

If the valve is not maintained properly the vessel risks the valve closing whilst en route. This can lead to black out of the vessel and possible collision, stranding or loss.

The Clubs root cause analysis of major claims often points towards failures in systems / practices such as these. Therefore it cannot be stressed enough how important proper maintenance and operation in these areas.

Source of Information: Loss Prevention Department
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