

UK P&I Club advises on the hazards in shipping coal from Indonesia

There are various hazards associated with the trade in coal. UK P&I Club's Loss Prevention Team highlights the risks involved, and advises on the relevant actions to take in order to reduce accidents.

Self-heating incidents involving coal cargoes loaded at Indonesian ports have become increasingly frequent in recent years. The problem appears to be primarily related to the nature of the coals, and may be exacerbated by the way they are handled prior to and during loading.

UK P&I Club provides practical tips on how to correctly handle and store coal:

- The two primary concerns with coal cargoes are that they may self-heat and that they may emit methane (a flammable gas). The IMSBC Code provides that the shippers' cargo declaration shall specify whether the cargo may be liable to emit methane or self-heat.
- During loading the temperature of the cargo has to be monitored regularly and any cargo at a temperature in excess of 55°C must be rejected. The cargo holds should be closed immediately after completion of loading in each cargo space. If delays occur during loading, partially filled holds have to be closed and they should not be ventilated.
- Once the holds are closed, monitoring of the hold atmosphere for methane, carbon monoxide and oxygen has to start immediately, with the proper record of results. If any of the results give cause for concern, the Club has to be notified immediately.
- Temperatures measured by lowering thermometers into sounding pipes may be useful in general terms but should not be relied upon to reflect any changes occurring in the bulk of the cargo, as it will only detect heating of the coal in the immediate vicinity of the sounding pipe. Gas measurement readings will provide more reliable information.

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Notes to editors

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