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## NEWSLETTER

VENEZUELA

JUNE 2016

### BUNKERS RESTRICTIONS IN ORINOCO RIVER PORTS

All of the principal Venezuelan products for exportation, aside from oil, such as iron, steel, aluminium and others which are produced at the CVG Industrial Complex, are loaded in Orinoco River ports in the area of Puerto Ordaz.

Presently, there exist restrictions regarding the distribution of bunkers to local ships. The government grants a limited amount of subsidized bunkers to each local ship. These measures were put in place in order to thwart the extraction of contraband bunkers.

These circumstances are impacting shipping in this sector, particularly service ships like tugboats and passenger boats.

Sometimes, this situation has made it difficult for tugboats to provide normal and regular service to vessels coming to the Orinoco ports. The setbacks caused by the lack of bunkers sometimes produce delays in the berthing

and unberthing of vessels. Fortunately, this situation does not constitute the general rule but arises only occasionally.

The provision of water to and the collection of garbage from the vessels have also been affected at times for the same reason when local ships have been unable to render required services.

Another inconvenience is for vessels coming to the Orinoco and which do not have landing facilities for helicopters transporting and boarding of official pilots. In this case, the official pilot who is charged with guiding the navigation procedures of the ship through the river would normally board the vessel via service boat located at the entrance of the river at the pilot station at Punta Barima. This situation is further complicated by the lack of availability of service boats at the Punta Barima pilot station due to the restrictions placed on bunkers.

Consequently, these vessels must stop at ports that are located near the entrance of the Orinoco with an available pilot station, such as the port of Guiria or Puerto La Cruz, for the official pilot to embark and disembark through normal service boats. The port of Guiria is about a one-day's navigation from the entrance of the Orinoco and Puerto La Cruz is about a two-day's navigation. This may cause delays and consequent additional costs.

One final consideration to take into account would be the consequences should a vessel run aground in the river necessitating the use of tugboats for assistance. One would hope that the authorities would facilitate, in case of need, the distribution of bunkers to the assisting tugboats given the impact that this emergency situation would have on the navigation on the Orinoco.

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