



Ship Type: Bulk Vessels Trade Area: Indonesia

Bulletin 309 - 06/03 - Mis-declaration of Coal - Indonesia

We have been informed of a recent case in Indonesia where a bulk carrier loaded a cargo of coal for which the 'Cargo Declaration' from the shipper stated that the IMO Category for Ocean Transport Purposes for the coal was CAT 'A'. This Category A no longer exists.

Category A **used** to be defined in the Code as: -

"Coal cargoes of a type that can be identified as having a history of shipment under similar circumstances without problems arising from methane emission or spontaneous heating".

The Cargo Declaration continued: -

"It is certified that for the Bulk Coal Cargo nominated on this certificate reasonable care has been taken to ensure the relevant information attendant upon its marine transportation has been properly described and that information is based upon the latest available experience".

Category 'A' was last included in the 1989 Code of Safe Practice for Solid Bulk Cargoes but the entry for coal was completely revised in the 1991 Edition of the Code with no reference to Categories 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'.

The revised Codes now simply state: -

"Coals may emit methane etc", "Coals may be subject to oxidation etc", "Coals may be liable to self heating etc" or "Some coals may be liable to react with water etc".

General requirements and special precautions for types of coal are then quoted. The effect of the revised Code is that Masters are not given a sense of false security (of there being no history of problems in the carriage of the coal), but are instead instructed in the methods of safe carriage. It could be therefore confusing and mis-leading to a ship's master in possession of the relevant Code to receive a cargo declaration relating to Category 'A'.

The shippers in this case also provided the master with a document relating to the characteristics of the coal stating, "All cargo to be loaded in accordance with the IMO Marine Safety Committee Code of Practice for Bulk Cargoes relating to coal detailed in Circular 554 dated 20th June 1991". Circular 554 was an interim document, which besides not being readily available has in fact been superseded by the 2001 edition of the Code.

In this case the master was instructed to seal the ventilators and hatch covers throughout the voyage. However the master was aware of the relevant Code of Practice and during the voyage conducted the necessary hold atmosphere tests in accordance with the Code. These tests showed increasing levels of carbon monoxide in some of the holds indicating that the cargo had commenced to heat spontaneously. With guidance he was able to control this spontaneous heating, continue the voyage and discharge the cargo without problems.

We advise all Members of the above situation and to be aware of The Code of Safe Practice for Solid Cargoes and amendments. **All Members should advise their masters of the tendency of some shippers of coal to refer to the out dated version of the Code and the possible confusion, which may arise.**

Source of information: Cliff Mullins (Minton, Treharne & Davies Limited)
through the Carefully to Carry Committee