

Reefer claims loss prevention

A loss prevention America Focus publication

Phase 5 - Loading and Onboard Carriage of the Reefer Container

After the refrigerated container is loaded to the vessel, the ship electrician or shore representative should be standing by ready to plug in the refrigerated containers to vessel power as they are stowed onboard ship. If substantive damage to the reefer plug and/or electric cord is noted, the damaged item should be recorded and fixed at the earliest possible time. Serious damage to the reefer container should be assessed, recorded, reported and corrected as needed.

As soon as the refrigerated container is plugged in, the mate on watch should also note the supply and return air temperatures and alarms and log them in the reefer log book. All set point temperatures and fresh air exchange (vent settings) should be checked against those listed on the refrigerated cargo manifest after loading and logging is complete. Incorrect settings should be recorded and corrected as appropriate.

Refrigerated containers that are not working properly should be reported to the electrician, and subsequently to the Chief Officer. The chief officer should report any problems to the refrigerated container operator if the refrigerated container owner is a partner line or to the booking office if the vessel owner owns or leases the reefer container. The booking office should notify the customer only if the situation warrants notification. For minor temperature discrepancies, it is up to the lines discretion if the customer should be notified as this might invite an unwarranted cargo claim.



The electrician should perform any repairs that are necessary for the refrigerated container. The electrician should also have access to a set of different reefer manuals for all the various types and manufacturers of reefer containers laden onboard the vessel. In addition, a basic set of spare parts for the various types of reefer containers should be kept onboard to effect necessary repairs. A system should be in place that allows for continuous access and replenishment

of these spare parts as they are used up. All repairs and problems should be noted in the reefer logbook.

The reefer container temperatures and vent settings should be monitored at least every 8 hours by the mate on watch. Every mate should understand how to read Partlow charts and/or the microprocessor printouts in order to determine the reefer containers performance during the hours passed since his last round. The chief officer should have the overall responsibility for maintaining the reefer log and reporting any problems to the respective shipping lines.

If the reefer container is malfunctioning, undergoing repairs, and/or for any reason not maintaining the proper temperature, the home office should be immediately notified and a satisfactory plan of action should be developed, including but not limited to conducting a post trip inspection of the reefer container. If the reefer container cannot be repaired onboard the vessel, it should be offloaded at the nearest port for repairs to determine if there has been damage to the cargo. The event data, temperature records and the pre and post trip downloads should be retrieved and maintained from the reefer container's microprocessor at this time. If the reefer container cannot be repaired after discharge from the vessel, the cargo should be transloaded into another container as soon as possible, preferably using a refrigerated dock to swing the load. A surveyor should be appointed to inspect the condition of the cargo, document the cargo stowage and record cargo pulp temperatures at forward, middle and aft locations of the load.

Once the reefer container has been repaired or transloaded, preparations must be made to arrange loading on the next vessel which calls the reefer's intended port of discharge. The customer must be notified and advised of the new reefer container number, seal number, vessel/voyage and new estimated arrival time. Additionally, the shipping line's documentation department should be notified to amend the customs manifest.

If the reefer container is discharged for repairs at a US port other than its intended discharge port and the vessel is a non-US flag vessel, the reefer container cannot be loaded to the next vessel until customs has agreed to waive any Jones Act violations against the shipping line. If a waiver is not received, the reefer container must be transported via the rail or truck to its intended port of discharge.

Acknowledgement:

Dr. Pat Brecht, PEB Commodities, Inc.

George Radu, Thomas Miller Insurance Services (San Francisco)
Email: George.radu@thomasmiller.com

Brendan Kruse, Thomas Miller (Americas) Inc. (New Jersey)
Email: Brendan.kruse@thomasmiller.com