

Insight & Opinion

Lloyd's List

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Off colour
and on board

THE problem of gigantism is that when things go wrong, they go badly wrong. A 10,000 teu containership is the cat's pyjamas when things are going well; scale economies providing what they always promise, from the colossal productivity of such a ship. But when a ship twice the size of normal is seriously delayed, disabled or subject to one of the manifold accidents which accompany a marine adventure, the fat is in the fire.

How do you deal with 5,000 or so wrathful recipients of those containers, all shouting over the phone and getting angrier and angrier as their shelves empty and the lorries fail to arrive and your telephone system tells them they are 845th in the queue?

It is just a function of size, and the fervent hope is that the various elements in the whole logistic chain live up to their promise to be so much more reliable than they were in the past. Thus, it doesn't happen very often, but when it does everyone wishes that they were still operating ships termed as "giants" of about 2,500 teu.

But gigantism is an important part of other trades too. Cruise shipping is another area where the mass market needs very big ships to provide its profits in a highly competitive field. Once again, great stuff when all is functioning well and cabin occupancy is high.

But when things go wrong and there are

3,000 passengers all shouting for their money back and organising class actions with lawyers specialising in such business, you probably wish for an earlier age of smaller ships, and more stoic customers.

The spot of bother encountered on *Carnival Liberty* last week, with 700 passengers and crew groaning with the unpleasant symptoms of the dreaded norovirus on a transatlantic voyage, is a perfect example of the less desirable consequences of scale. Time was when a doctor's post on a cruiseship was a stress-free environment, with seasickness and the odd case of sunburn the biggest challenges. Today, with these mass outbreaks of what some people prefer to call the "winter vomiting disease", the ship's surgeon and staff must feel they are presiding over major epidemics aboard virtual plague-ships of legend.

It seems that there is very little they can do, short of locking the sufferers in

their cabins and getting in the cleaning and disinfecting squads. Because they know that they can have the ship scrubbed like a new pin, reeking of strong disinfectants, and the very first person up the gangway can be some old dear who has providentially left her sheltered accommodation where the norovirus is at that very moment erupting. It goes with the territory and just as gigantic ships require huge crews and mind-boggling supplies of stores for these floating populations to feast upon, they require an awful lot of medical help when the passengers start chucking up.

Perhaps the key to prevent these floating pandemics lies not so much in the treatment afloat, but a more sure and certain way to discourage people who feel off-colour from pressing ahead with their holidays. Which presupposes a serious conversation between megaship operators, and those who organise holiday insurance.

Waterfront woes

THE issue of special identity cards for those who work on the US and Canadian waterfronts has been causing no end of trouble. Initially proposed to ensure that potential terrorists were not able to find their way through dock gates, the security clearances inevitably throw up all sorts of non-terrorist criminality.

People with convictions in their past suddenly find they are rendered ineligible for the documentation they require to continue in their jobs. The convictions may be "spent" but not evidently spent enough to convince those issuing the cards. Indeed there is now a mindset which suggests it is almost "unfair" that the law enforcers are using the terror threat to clean up the waterfront of criminals who would not dream of hazarding national security.

Ms Marpol solves noxious cargo case

Marja Tiemens-Idzinga of the IMO has been involved in revising Marpol Annex II from the start and thinks the changes reflect technical progress, writes **Sandra Speares**

AS THE countdown begins for the synchronised introduction of revisions to Marpol Annex II and amendments to the International Bulk Chemicals Code on January 1, carriers of bulk cargoes of noxious liquid substances should be at maximum stretch in order to meet the deadline.

Owners must act now to ensure they fulfil the requirements regarding certificates of fitness and revised procedures and arrangements (P&A) manuals, and not wait until the last minute, according to master mariner Marja Tiemens-Idzinga, known in International Maritime Organization circles as Ms Marpol.

She sees the new rules as a win-win position for the industry and a chance not only to bring some much needed clarity to the carriage of noxious cargoes by sea, but also to take a positive step in environmental terms.

The original drive behind the revision process was pollution caused by unregulated discharge of lipophilic substances which centred attention on re-categorisation of vegetable oils, animal fats and fish oils.

The Netherlands took the initiative to propose a revision to Annex II, which, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga says, was showing "old age symptoms".

Having been drafted some time ago, Marpol Annex II was not up to today's technical and scientific standards, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga said.

The revision process began with the emphasis on a few items, she said, including simplification on the editorial side, the recategorisation of the products and bringing the technical side up to date.

In the Netherlands, she said there was no desire for change for change's sake, but a change on a "good fundamental basis". A Netherlands project group produced the so-called "No, no no report" — short for "no nonsense with noxious liquid substances".

"From the beginning we were very open towards all stakeholders because we thought the most important thing was to keep them all involved."

At IMO, the editorial amendments started with Norway initially leading the correspondence group. The Netherlands took over in the mid-1990s.

"My aim from the beginning was not only to keep all stakeholders involved, but informed" she says.

The revisions to Annex II and amendments to the IBC Code were eventually finalised in 2004, stipulating the relevant ship types for certain classes of cargo and changes in the categorisation of chemicals, vegetable oils and other oil-like substances in line with the UN globally harmonised system for the classification of chemical hazards.

The process involves the introduction of a four-category system for noxious and liquid substances.

To those critics who say the revision took a long time, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga responds that the start of the revision process was followed by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, which set the framework for the global harmonised system (GHS).

To make the situation "transparent" for all stakeholders, it was decided the GHS would be taken on board in the revision. "We wanted to avoid double the work, and decided a little delay was better than a system that you had to revise in a short while." The aim was to have a robust system going forward with a degree of certainty for industry in making investment decisions. "The terms of reference were simplification, recategorisation taking into account GHS, bringing the revised Annex II up to date with current technical standards and also to look at the administrative part to keep it at the same level or even to lower it. I think we succeeded".

The revision was very much a team effort, both nationally and internationally, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga stresses. "The team for me is called IMO."

Responding to concerns about how to deal with the implementation process, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga, who chairs the working group on the evaluation of safety and pollution hazards, said circular 2730 of July 3, 2006, was developed as a means of "spreading the word" about the revisions, representing, she said "another effort from IMO to assist stakeholders to the maximum".

There are also a number of presentations being made to port authorities, enforcement agencies and brokers, the chemical industry or industry associations to explain what the revisions mean.

Revision of Annex II differed from that of Annex I as the latter was "only editorial" while Annex II has "substantial items in it," Ms Tiemens-Idzinga



Marja Tiemens-Idzinga, left, sees the new rules as an ideal situation for all in avoiding disasters such as the oil tanker *Tasman Spirit*, right, which ironically displayed the phrase 'protect our environment' while threatening to leak oil off the coast of Karachi, Pakistan in 2003, causing the kind of devastation this oil-covered seabird, below, had to endure. AP



Many shipowners say the revision is a 'win-win situation', giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to improved environmental performance



said. The main challenge for the revised Annex II is to ensure that there is a balance between the protection of the marine environment and the current realities of trading in noxious liquid substances.

Ms Tiemens-Idzinga said that many shipowners say that the revision represented a "win-win situation" giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to improved environmental performance.

While the shipping industry is sometimes conservative in its approach to change she says that if they are shown the benefits and how they can promote the shipping industry while protecting the marine environment, they respond positively.

While some market analysts have commented on the potential offered by the changes as far as higher freight rates are concerned, others have expressed concerns, particularly carriers of vegetable oil about the fact that it will no longer be possible to carry it in single hulled ships from January 1.

The current method of carrying vegetable oil was one of the "catalysts" for change, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga says. "We did studies, and we know from those studies that vegetable oil is as harmful to the environment as mineral oil, the only difference is that mineral oil is more toxic".

With this in mind she says "how do you explain that you are going to do a phase out of single-hull tankers for mineral oil and not do anything for vegetable oils?"

While she acknowledges that there were concerns, "because we listened to everybody, we came up with the compromise in the new regulation 4.1.3 in the revised Annex II".

One concern was over availability of tonnage. A study showed that there would be a nominal surplus of the required tonnage, she said, "but nominal is not huge".

The US, Panama and the Netherlands came up with a compromise by which vegetable oils and animal fats which would normally be required to be carried in Type 2 tankers, could be carried in a Type 3 tanker, provided they are double sided and double bottomed and meet requirements for ship Type 3 and operational requirements under the revised Annex II.

The double sided requirements would follow those stipulated in the IBC Code and the double bottom ones would follow Annex I of Marpol. Administrations would of course have to approve the use of Type 3 tankers as outlined in 4.1.3.

Ms Tiemens-Idzinga says she believes that by using 4.1.3 there will be sufficient tanker capacity.

Turning to the IBC Code, the amended text was adopted in October 2004, with chapters 17 and 18 including all products for which a complete hazard profile was available. Some 183 products were identified that did not have a complete hazard profile. IMO sent out a circular urging people to act to have these products included in the code with a deadline of December 2005.

A further 120 products were evaluated with about 60 currently remaining that do not have a complete hazard profile, Ms Tiemens-Idzinga explains.

"We asked the chemical industry but they could not give us a clear answer as to whether those products are still carried in bulk," she said. Those products that have been evaluated since the IBC revision are contained in List 1 of the MEPC 2 circular.

A further step is to be taken to amalgamate List 1 and the IBC Code and this will form the basis for the new batch of amendments to the code which enter into force in 2009. These amendments have been approved by the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environmental Protection Committee and will be adopted by the two committees at the relevant meetings at MSC 82 starting later this month and MEPC 56 in July.

The 2009 amendments will delete double entries. After the adoption of the

revised IBC Code, new data was sent in for some products, in particular for vegetable oils, which differed from that contained in the amended code, for example as far as the free fatty acid (FFA) content was concerned.

It was decided it was necessary to identify the FFA level because it was an important component when it comes to safety hazards.

The vegetable oil industry asked if the vegetable oils were evaluated with the maximum possible FFA, this would mean it would be possible to dispense with the additional notation which specified the percentage of FFA in question.

"We thought that was a very good solution," Ms Tiemens-Idzinga said.

Ms Tiemens-Idzinga says the priority is not what happens on January 1, but what happens now. "My strong plea to the industry is to send in your information for your new P&A manual and certificate of fitness as soon as possible." She says owners cannot expect administrations and classification societies "to work on New Year's Eve because documents are sent in at a late stage".

The Netherlands has informed Dutch registered companies that they need to "start working", she said.

She has been giving presentations on the revision and says the responses have all been positive as, having been involved from the beginning, she was

able to explain why measures had been taken and what consultation process had been undertaken with all the interested parties.

Another aspect of next year's changes that she emphasises at presentations is the use of the correct product name when offering bulk liquid cargoes for shipment.

"This is not common practice at the moment." Its implementation, she says, will assist crews and also enforcement. "It will save time at every end." The plan is that by using the product name listed in the IBC code, it will eliminate the confusion of different people or countries using different names to describe the same product. Chapter 17 of the amended IBC Code says that any cargo offered for bulk shipment shall be indicated in the shipping document by the product name under which it is listed in chapters 17 and 18 of the IBC Code or the latest edition of MEPC 1/Circular, which takes into account products evaluated since last year's amendments.

More and more administrations are pushing their shipowners to act, she says. She says that her feedback suggests that P&A manuals are beginning to hit class society desks and "that's good news". There are also class societies that have computer-generated systems to assist in implementing the new rules.