California low sulphur fuel changes 1 January 2014

Phase II of the California Ocean-going Vessel (OGV) Fuel Regulation entered into force on 1 January 2014 and stipulates that only marine gas oil (DMA) and marine diesel oil (DMB) with sulphur levels at or below 0.1% can be used. The Phase II requirements are enforced within California’s OGV Regulatory Zone which extends 24 nm from the California Baseline (shoreline), including 24 nm from the shoreline of the offshore islands. Although the regulation does provide a ‘Noncompliance Fee Provision’ designed to accommodate operators unable to find compliant fuel, Members and clients with ships calling at U.S. West Coast ports are urged to make their best efforts to obtain compliant fuel oil. More details are provided in California Air Resources Board’s Marine Notice 2013-1 which can be obtained by using the following link: http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/marinevess/ogv.htm.

It should be noted that ships must comply with both the California OGV Fuel Regulation and the MARPOL Annex VI North American Emission Control Area (ECA) fuel sulphur requirements. The ECA sulphur limit will drop to 0.1% from the start of 2015.

In addition, Members and clients should be aware that there are also 2014 requirements for some vessels under California’s At-Berth Regulation. More information on this regulation can be found by using the following link: http://www.arb.ca.gov/ports/shorepower/shorepower.htm.

Gard would also like to take the opportunity to remind Members and Clients of the importance of having detailed changeover procedures for ships that trade between areas with different sulphur limitations. The need for frequent changeovers between different types of fuels clearly increases the opportunity for errors to occur and it is very important that the crew is familiar with the properties of the fuel supplied and the limitations of the particular ship’s fuel treatment plant. Insufficient knowledge of the actions required in a given situation may result in engine failure, so changeover procedures should be practised before entering restricted waters, especially on ships that do not regularly perform fuel changeovers.

1 See also Gard Alert from October 2011 concerning amendments to the California Fuel Regulations.
2 It is a MARPOL Anne VI requirement to have a written procedure on board the ship showing how the fuel oil change-over is to be done when entering or leaving an Emission Control Area (ECA).

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