

Bunker Sampling

Introduction and background

Gard is frequently involved with machinery damage/claims related to fuel quality. The purpose of this circular is to emphasise the importance of the fuel ordering, delivery procedures, bunker delivery receipts and bunkering samples including the correct procedures for taking and handling of the samples.

Reducing the risk

To reduce or minimise the risk of claims arising or breakdown of machinery, there are some main issues to be aware of when handling bunkers.



- Fuel sampling and analysis is essential for verification of the quality of the fuel received onboard. Procedures and instructions should be established within the technical or operational departments to ensure correct sampling and stating where the samples should be sent for analysis. It is important to ensure that the engineers on board and technical staff ashore understand the results of the analysis and the limitations of their equipment. It is important that the quantity of the sample is large enough for the appropriate analysis to be undertaken.
- Always be selective when selecting fuel supplier. Order fuel to the desired ISO grade, and describe the required grade in the charterparty as well as in the request to the supplier.
- Take samples at the time of delivery and obtain confirmation from the suppliers that the samples are representative of the entire delivery. The samples taken must be properly labeled. If the supplier takes other samples at the time of delivery, try to establish how and when they were taken. Issue a protest if you are not invited to witness the sampling.

Your contacts

Senior Manager, Loss Prevention
Terje R. Paulsen
→ terje.paulsen@gard.no

Senior Loss Prevention Executive
Marius Schönberg
→ marius.schonberg@gard.no

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- One sample should be retained on board the ship, another should be retained by the supplier, and a further sample may be used for analysis purposes and a fourth may be held by a responsible independent party for safe keeping and reference in case of a dispute.
- Bunker fuel samples should be sent to the laboratory for testing as soon as possible after completion of bunkering. Use a fast, reliable testing service to analyse the samples. Segregate any new fuel from that already held onboard. Avoid using the new fuel until the analysis results have been considered and it has been established that the fuel is suitable. Maintain accurate daily records of the contents of and consumption from each tank.

Off-Spec bunkers

If off-spec bunkers have been delivered and are found to be unsuitable for use, the bunkers should be off-loaded and replaced by new on-spec bunkers. If inferior bunkers have to be used or have already been used the following should be done:

- The vessel should immediately notify the shipowner if it is experiencing problems with off-spec fuel. If the shipowner purchased the fuel directly from the supplier, he should notify the bunker supplier and forward a copy of the test result. The time limit for any protest vis-à-vis the supplier is very short, at times only 2 weeks.
- Expert advice should be obtained from a reliable fuel testing service as to how to proceed and how to solve the particular problem. Contact the engine manufacturer as well as the fuel supplier for advice. Further actions to be taken will depend on which parameter is off-specification.

Recommendations

Bunkering procedures, including fuel-testing procedures and charter party requirements to fuel quality, should be reviewed to ensure that the correct procedures are followed when dealing with off-spec bunkers. The shipowners should also familiarise himself with any recommendations issued by class societies or any other experts. The crew involved should also be properly briefed on these guidelines and procedures to avoid costly and time consuming interruptions. Gard strongly recommends that bunker sampling and testing should be carried out in accordance with correct procedures. The lack of testing can lead to extensive damage to the vessels machinery which is costly for all involved.

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Your contacts

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➔ terje.paulsen@gard.no

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