

TradeWinds, 16 Oct, titled “Intercargo issues stark warning on liquefaction risk”



Flag state performance for bulk carrier casualty investigations “woefully inadequate”. Volodymyr Kyrlyuk/Shutterstock.com

EFFORTS to eradicate bulk carrier losses due to cargo liquefaction have so far had limited results, shipowner body Intercargo has said.

Several countries in Asia and Africa have responded positively to pleas for better controls on loading dangerous bulks, said Intercargo officials during an interval of

technical and executive committee meetings in Athens.

Malaysia and Sierra Leone were cited as examples of countries that have set up special authorities with competence for cargo safety.

But others were “not so diligent” and more responsibility was needed on the part of individual shippers.

Since 2010, nine bulkers have been lost along with 111 lives, all due to cargo liquefaction resulting from cargoes becoming excessively moist from rainfall before loading.

Earlier this year, 18 of 19 crew members were lost when *Bulk Jupiter* sank while carrying Bauxite from Indonesia. Liquefaction was also blamed for the loss in July of *Alum Manis*, with the death of one seafarer.

“We consider ourselves to be a very efficient and safe industry. But we are not getting the cooperation from charterers and shippers that we would expect to help address the problems,” said Intercargo chairman John Platsidakis.

Shippers needed to demonstrate they had the quality systems in place to properly monitor the moisture content of potentially dangerous cargoes, although Mr Platsidakis conceded this could be “a huge job”.

Meanwhile the association wanted further countries at national level to “show that they care”.

While Intercargo was engaging in research with the International Group of P&I clubs and specialists in soil mechanics to try to better define ‘trigger points’ for liquefaction of various cargoes, this had not so far resulted in definitive answers, said technical committee chairman Dimitris Fafalios.

“But the onus for providing a safe cargo lies primarily with the shipper,” said Mr Fafalios.

“Shippers must take their responsibilities seriously and understand the impact of their actions. Lives are lost and even one lost life is too many,” Mr Fafalios said.

Privately, shipping sources say that while some shippers act responsibly, others have tried to falsify the moisture content of the cargo and even to pass off one commodity as another.

Quicker production of reports into accidents is the aim of another Intercargo campaign.

“We expect flag states to come up with accident reports in a timely way,” said Mr Platsidakis.

Flag state performance for bulk carrier casualty investigations in the last 10 years was “woefully inadequate”, with only 24 reports submitted to the International Maritime Organization for 69 losses.

The average time from the incident to a report being made available was 20 months.

“We believe it is totally unacceptable for the public and the industry to wait that long to identify what the problem is,” Mr Platsidakis said.

Bahamas’ report this year into the Bulk Jupiter casualty was praised as an example of how a report should be carried out: “in a timely manner and in-depth with clear recommendations”.

Intercargo noted that the report identified the shippers in the case as “uncooperative” when asked for information.

“It is only when we get full transparency and cooperation from the shippers, with accurate shippers’ declarations on the composition of bulk cargoes, that we will be able to fully identify and mitigate the risks involved,” the association said.