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**Industry survey shows switch to low-sulphur fuel has not been without problems**

*The maritime industry’s transition to the sulphur regulation from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which came into force on 1 January 2020 has not been without problems. Since fuel oil properties are fluctuating, it is expected that quality and safety problems will continue to be a challenge for the global shipping industry.*

BIMCO, International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO have published the results of an industry survey aimed at getting an overview of how the industry has experienced the transition to using compliant low-sulphur fuel oil from 1 January.

The survey was launched on 24 February 2020 and ended on 6 May 2020, and the main focus of the survey is on problematic properties of the IMO 2020 compliant fuel oil that can lead to issues.

“The survey gives us valuable insight into the magnitude and nature of problems encountered by the industry in the transition to using low-sulphur fuel oil. The industry had widespread experience with how to manage heavy fuel oil, and the survey provides insight into which parameters of the new fuel types are posing the biggest challenges for onboard fuel management,” says Christian Bækmark Schiolborg, Manager, Marine Environment at BIMCO.

The survey focuses on potential problems such as increased sludge discharge, clogging of fuel pipes, preheaters, fuel separators and fuel filters, fuel pumps getting stuck, problems with fuel injection and poor ignition of fuel oil. It also focuses on other issues regarding incomplete combustion, wax appearance and increased wear and tear of cylinder liners. These are problems that may lead to loss of propulsion and/or black out.

The survey indicates global challenges with fuel characteristics and limits being off specifications most frequently when it comes to total sediment, aluminium plus silicon, pour point, ash, flash point, acid number and viscosity.

It also indicates that most common operational problems experienced are increased sludge deposits and wax appearance after switching to the compliant fuel oils with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.50%.

Lastly, the survey indicates that when commercial fuel oil samples are tested after bunkering, sulphur content is among the most frequent parameters to be indicated as off specifications and consequently, an indication of potential non-compliance with MARPOL annex VI.

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