

Higher the GM, higher the racking forces

Know your GM criteria when calculating stack height and weight.



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AMSA inspection campaign to focus on stowage and securing of containers

In response to several incidents of containers being lost into the sea, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has initiated a focused inspection campaign on container stowage and securing arrangements, both fixed and portable, that will run from 1 August 2020 to 31 October 2020.

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Introduction

Containers lost at sea present a serious safety and an environmental hazard. The [World Shipping Council](#) estimates that over the last 12 years (2008-2019), 1,382 containers have been lost at sea on an average each year due to both catastrophic and non-catastrophic incidents. A series of such incidents off Australian coast in recent years has prompted AMSA to launch its [focused inspection campaign](#) (FIC) “*to demonstrate that inadequate cargo securing arrangements and the loss of cargo in Australian waters is not acceptable*”. The purpose of this FIC is two-fold:

- Draw shipowners’ and operators’ attention to their obligations under reg. 2 and 5, Chapter VI of SOLAS; and
- Specifically focus on the use of cargo information as well as stowage and securing of containers.

Inspection process

This FIC is specific to Australia and will only target foreign vessels in Australian waters that have, or are required to have, cargo securing arrangements approved under regulation 5 of Chapter VI of SOLAS. Inspections can take place either in conjunction with normal port state control (PSC) inspections, or as a standalone inspection where a vessel is not eligible for PSC inspection. Where a deficiency is found, the inspector will discuss it with the Master with a view to ensure that the non-compliance is corrected.

Any data derived from these inspections will **not** be shared with regional port State control regime databases, such as the Tokyo MoU and Indian Ocean MoU, unless the vessel is deemed non-compliant and the PSC inspector believes clear grounds exist to conduct a full PSC inspection.

Scope of inspection

AMSA has provided a [checklist](#) which inspectors will follow when conducting the inspections. The inspectors will typically be focusing on the following areas during inspections:

- **Cargo Securing Manual**
 - Is there an approved cargo securing manual (CSM) which adequately covers the cargo being carried;
 - Are crew aware of its contents, particularly stack weight limitations.
- **Container stowage**
 - Permissible stack weights are not exceeded in current and previous voyages;
 - Vertical weight distribution has been complied with in current and previous voyages;
 - The forces on containers and securing systems should not exceed the allowable force limits specified in the CSM;
 - The vessel has been provided with a verified gross mass (VGM) of containers;
 - Relevant officers are well familiar with any computer programs used onboard for stowage, stability calculations, lashing forces etc.
- **Container securing**
 - Securing is in accordance with the CSM;

- Lashing equipment is sufficient, in good order, and compatible with the vessel;
- Twistlocks, base locks and stacking cones are positioned correctly;
- Cargo securing points are not rusty or poorly maintained;
- Lashing checks are done during the voyage.
- **Heavy weather navigation**
 - Safety management system requirements for heavy weather navigation;
 - Crew's familiarity with the above.

Recommendations

Gard recommends that members and clients:

- Make their crew familiar with the contents of the [checklist](#) which will be used by AMSA inspectors; reference can also be made to AMSA's marine notice [03/2018 'Proper stowage of cargo containers'](#).
- Provide training to relevant officers and crew on ensuring compliance with CSM; and
- Identify areas of shortcomings and rectify them well before calling Australia.

Relevant Gard material

Case study

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Posters

- [Higher the GM, higher the racking forces](#)
- [Lashing equipment](#)

Articles

- [Why do containership stacks collapse and who is liable?](#)
- [Loading a packed container without a verified weight to be a violation of SOLAS](#)
- [Cause and prevention of container loss at sea](#)
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Books

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