



Cargo securing on the PSC agenda

As port state control authorities prepare to step up inspections of cargo securing arrangements, ship operators should ensure that manuals and procedures are in line with IMO requirements and guidance, that securing equipment is in good working order, and that crews are properly trained.

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Joint inspection campaign on cargo securing

From 1 September to 30 November 2026, Port State Control (PSC) authorities under the Paris and Tokyo MOUs will conduct a Concentrated Inspection Campaign (CIC) targeting ships' cargo securing arrangements. The campaign is expected to apply to ships carrying non-bulk cargoes, as well as bulk carriers and tankers with a Cargo Securing Manual (CSM) on board. Other PSC regimes may also participate in the campaign.

The Paris and Tokyo MOUs' joint press release and official CIC questionnaire were published on 3 August and are available [here](#) . Key focus areas will include:

- carriage of an approved, ship-specific CSM, officers' familiarity with its requirements, and cargo being stowed and secured in accordance with the manual;
- cargo plans reflecting the verified gross mass (VGM) of containers, availability of a Cargo Safe Access Plan (CSAP) where required, and approved portable securing devices being carried on board and properly maintained; and
- measures to prevent cargo loss overboard, comply with bridge visibility requirements, and follow the ship's procedures for heavy weather navigation and cargo protection.

These focus areas matter because cargo securing is not only a compliance issue, but also a practical safety concern. Poorly stowed or secured cargo may move during the voyage, with consequences for ship stability, crew safety, and damage to the cargo or vessel. In some cases, cargo may be lost overboard, creating navigational or environmental hazards and potentially significant recovery and claims costs.

This is also reflected in Gard's claims experience, where cargo failures are frequently seen in heavy weather-related claims, particularly on ships carrying multiple cargo units, such as containers, vehicles and break-bulk cargo. We therefore emphasise the importance of ensuring that the CSM reflects the standards set out in the IMO Code of Safe Practice for Cargo Stowage and Securing (CSS Code), whose principles link stowage and securing decisions to the most severe weather conditions that may reasonably be expected during the intended voyage. Further information can be found in this [insight](#) , which refers to one tragic case in which a crew member died while assessing a cargo shift on a vehicle carrier en route, and another in which the shifting of a heavy cargo unit nearly caused a vessel to capsize.

What previous PSC campaigns show

A 2016 CIC on cargo securing arrangements conducted by the [Tokyo MOU](#) , and joined by the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Black Sea MOUs, showed a consistent pattern: most ships carried a CSM, but some manuals did not fully comply with IMO guidance. Deficiencies related to actual lashings, securing points, and Cargo Safe Access Plans were also repeatedly identified. Although cargo-securing-related detentions were relatively rare, the campaign highlighted the need for operators to ensure that CSMs are fully compliant, accurately reflect shipboard practices, and are understood and applied by personnel involved in cargo operations.

A separate three-month inspection campaign by Australia in 2020, focused specifically on container stowage and securing, found that fixed and portable lashing equipment was generally maintained to a reasonable standard, but that many ship officers did not demonstrate sufficient understanding of the approved CSM. The most serious deficiencies identified during that campaign related to excessive stack weights, poor weight distribution and inadequate securing throughout the voyage.

Recommendations

SOLAS Regulation VI/5.6 requires all cargoes, cargo units and cargo transport units, other than solid and liquid bulk cargoes, to be loaded, stowed and secured throughout the voyage in accordance with the CSM approved by the Administration. The manual should be prepared in line with the recommendations in the *Revised guidelines for the preparation of the CSM* , MSC.1/Circ.1353/Rev.2.

Ship operators and crews are therefore encouraged to use the upcoming CIC as a timely reminder to review their cargo securing arrangements and test whether they work in practice. As previous campaigns have shown, the main issue is often not the absence of a CSM, but whether its contents are up to date, understood and applied on board. Operators should therefore go beyond simply verifying that the CSM is carried on board and ensure that risks are assessed, crew members are properly trained, securing equipment is maintained, and approved procedures are followed consistently during cargo operations.

The pre-defined [questionnaire](#) that will guide the CIC inspections should be used as part of this review. Australia's [Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin issue 22](#) on cargo securing of containers may also prove useful. It highlights lessons from major container losses and strategies to improve compliance.

Deficiencies in cargo securing arrangements may also lead to SMS-related findings, particularly where they point to weaknesses in onboard procedures, maintenance routines, crew familiarisation, or company oversight.

Also worth noting

At its 11th session in September 2025, the IMO Sub-Committee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC 11) made progress on two agenda items directly relevant to cargo securing:

Amendments to the CSM Guidelines, MSC.1/Circ.1353/Rev.2: The Sub-Committee advanced the revision of the guidelines, including provisions on the use of lashing software as a supplement to approved stowage and securing plans. However, as agreement was not reached on all performance standards and validation requirements, the work is expected to be finalised at CCC 12 in September 2026 and submitted to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) for approval.

Measures to prevent the loss of containers at sea: The Sub-Committee agreed on a comprehensive work plan to address container losses, identifying the following priority areas for future IMO action:

- Operational guidance and limitations
- Conditions at sea
- Loading, stowage, validation, and planning
- Calculation technical standards and container securing gear properties and related inspection programmes
- Container properties and related inspection programmes

With the work plan now agreed, interested parties are invited to prepare new proposals on the identified topics, including proposals for regulatory development.

As a closing note, the [World Shipping Council](#) 's 2026 update on containers lost at sea provides useful wider context on loss trends, contributing factors, and industry efforts to improve container safety.