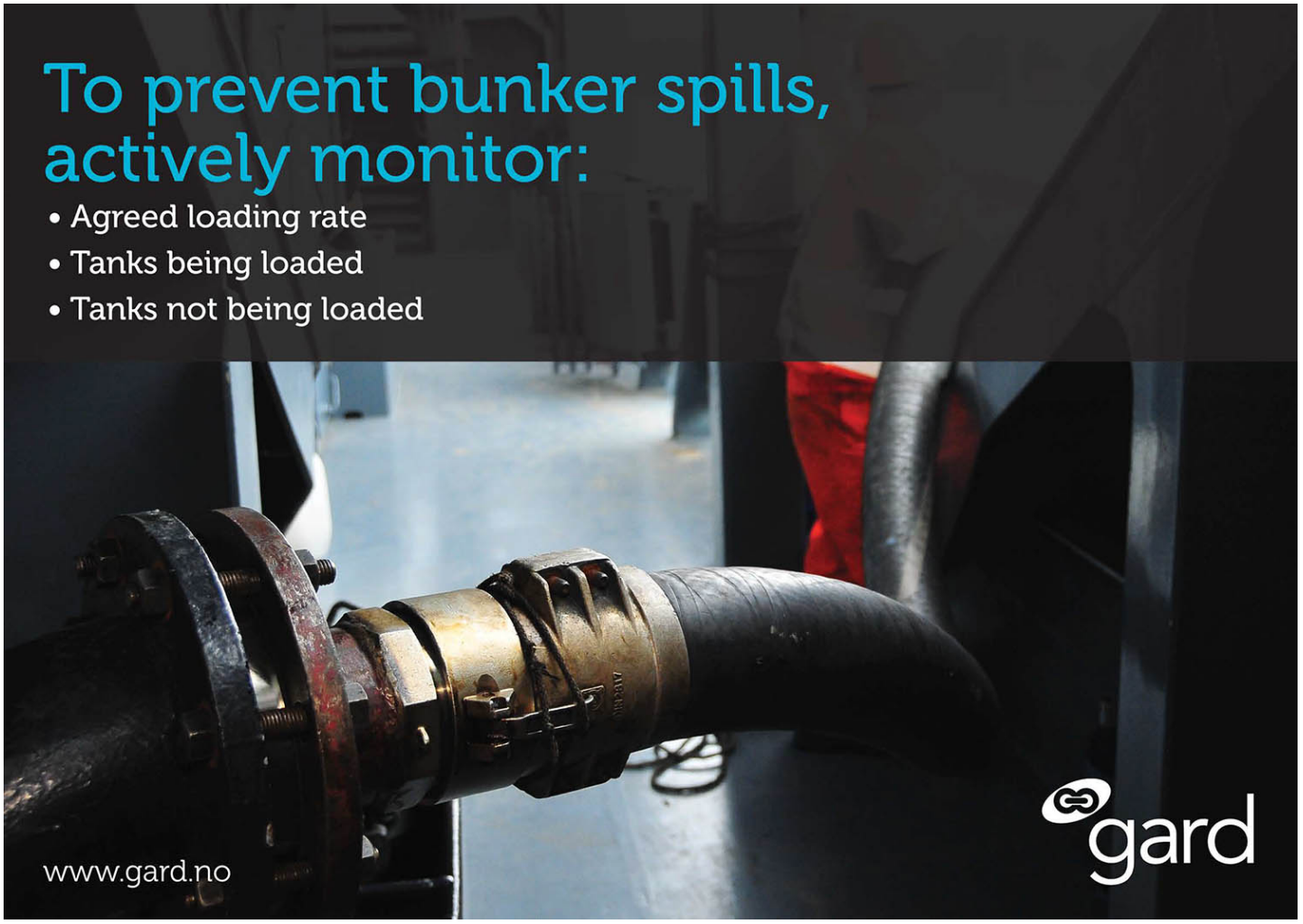

What is the cause of most bunker spills?

Overflow incidents account for the majority of bunker spills seen by Gard.

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Over the last five policy years, 2014 to 2018, 18% of all pollution incidents handled by the Gard claims teams have been caused by bunker spills, with an average cost per incident in excess of USD 100,000. Although bunkering is a routine operation, it involves high risk. The two main concerns in bunker spills are firstly, the environmental impact of spills, especially from persistent oils, and secondly, the risk of crew members and/or owners facing criminal prosecution. So why do spills happen and how can they be prevented?

There can be a variety of reasons for the spills but the majority are overflow incidents. The underlying causes could be a high flow rate, incorrect line up, improper monitoring of both the tanks being bunkered and those not being bunkered, or not acting on high level alarms. The human element is very much involved. We see that bunker procedures and checklists usually contain all the necessary points to prevent such incidents from happening but what is lacking is putting them into practice. In our experience continuous monitoring of bunker tanks irrespective of whether they are being filled or not can help prevent a spillage, even in cases of incorrect line up. It is important that crew members who have been assigned to manage a bunkering operation, are not burdened with other tasks and are well rested so that they can focus on following what is required by their procedures.

More information

- Loss Prevention poster type: asset-hyperlink id: 4c8db55999484195aaec93f039a4009a
- Insight: Bunkers and bunkering - It's nothing to do with your golf swing
- Insight: Bunker spills
- Insight: P&I incident - How not to do it - Bunker operations
- Selection of articles on bunkers
- Case study: type: asset-hyperlink id: 46d3cf99045341bfbe2bab6c18505982