



Gard Alert: Keeping pace with maritime regulatory changes

Many of the players in the maritime industry are likely to associate the date 1 July 2016 with the entering into force of the new container weight verification requirements. Others view the same date as an important milestone in their work towards implementation of ECDIS onboard ships.

Published 02 September 2024

Through our [Gard Updates](#), we focus on a wide range of shipping, claims and insurance issues from the perspective of sharing knowledge and providing advice and recommendations on how to manage technical and operational risks, including information about important maritime regulatory changes (international, regional or domestic) that may affect Members' and clients' operations and obligations. Below are only a few examples of international and regional regulations that have entered into force so far in 2016 and for which non-compliance could compromise the safety of the ship and/or come with financial consequences for the shipowner:

SOLAS - Atmospheric testing instruments for enclosed spaces

Mandatory requirement for portable atmosphere testing instruments to be carried on board ships entered into force on 1 July 2016 through a new SOLAS regulation X-I/7. These instruments shall be used to test enclosed spaces from the outside of the space itself prior to entry. ([Gard Alert 18 December 2014](#)).

SOLAS - Electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS)

SOLAS regulation V/19.2 relating to the use of ECDIS by ships engaged in international voyages was approved in 2009 and introduces an implementation schedule based on ships' type and date of construction. 1 July 2016 is the "deadline" for cargo ships of 50,000 GT and above constructed before 1 July 2013 and such ships must comply with the carriage requirements of ECDIS and back-up arrangement no later than the first safety equipment survey on or after this date ([Gard Insight 24 October 2012](#)).

SOLAS - Mandatory verification of the gross mass of containers

Amendments to SOLAS regulation VI/2 entered into force on 1 July 2016, and require the gross mass of a packed container to be verified before it is loaded onto a ship. The amendments place a requirement on the shipper of a packed container to provide the container's verified gross mass (VGM) in a signed shipping document, and submit this document to the ship and port terminal representatives sufficiently in advance of loading onto the ship to be used in the preparation of the ship stowage plan. If the VGM is not provided in advance, the container cannot be loaded onto the ship ([Gard Insight 27 April 2016](#)).

China – Introduction of 0.50 per cent sulphur cap in major port regions

In an effort to reduce sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions in some of China's major ports, a new regulation designating the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta and Bohai-rim Waters as domestic "emission control areas" (ECAs) was issued in 2015. From 1 April 2016, ships have been required to use fuel with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.50 per cent whilst berthed at the key ports within the Yangtze River Delta ECA ([Gard Alert 13 April 2016](#)).

Brazil - New regulations covering wood packaging material In order to reduce the risk of the introduction and spread of pests into Brazil, new regulations for the monitoring and phytosanitary certification of wood packing material for goods imported or exported by Brazil took effect on 1 February 2016 ([Gard Alert 29 January 2016](#)).

The maritime regulatory framework is complex and regional differences are plentiful. Members and clients are therefore advised to liaise with flag States, classification societies, local shipping agents as well as Gard and our local correspondents in order to monitor and prepare for the proper implementation of new and amended regulations. And although some of the new requirements apply to all ships while others apply to specific ship segments; some require that practical and physical changes are made onboard the ship while others require procedural changes only; most have one common denominator: the need for updated onboard procedures and awareness training of ship's crew.

Gard also regularly publishes case studies for safety meetings focussing on the risk assessment process and identification of the chain of errors that led to a particular incident. The purpose is to provide ships' officers and crew with a tool to improve experience transfer and safety awareness. Case studies relevant for the above listed examples of international and regional regulations that have entered into force so far in 2016 are:

- [Case Study: Entry into enclosed space](#)
- [Case Study: Have you checked your ECDIS lately?](#)
- [Case Study: ECDIS familiarisation](#)
- [Case Study: Fuel treatment](#)

An overview of all Gard's Case Studies can be found [here](#) and copies can be provided upon request.