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POLLUTION PREVENTION

1. SCUPPER PLUGS[1]

The Chief Officer is responsible for the inspection and maintenance of all the scupper plugs onboard.[2]

The scuppers shall always be kept plugged[3]:

- Prior switching on hydraulic machinery (mooring winch, windlass, hatch cover, crane hydraulic system)
- Prior bunkering operations
- When the vessel is alongside port (to prevent any accidental oil stain / grease on deck escaping into water)[4]

There have been the recurring non-compliances regarding use of the scuppers plugs onboard observed by the Company staff during bunkering operations. Examples include[5]:

- The plugs were not effectively tightened,
- The plugs were loosely fitted in the scupper hole and came out easily when pulled up.
- The plugs were defective, and the rubber diaphragm was not compressing upon turning the knob.
- The plug couldn't be tightened due to the turning lever being obstructed by the guard rail stay.[6]

Diaphragm is not compressing/inflating on turning the tightening knob

Unable to tighten the plug due to obstruction for turning lever

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The scupper plug must be tightened until some resistance is felt so that the rubber diaphragm seals the scupper hole effectively. The plugs are inserted in place by the duty deck rating, but the duty officer must cross check to ensure that scupper plugs are effectively sealed.[7]

Plugs that cannot be tightened due to design constraints, shall be identified, and the securing system modified to allow the scupper to be inflated as required. Crew must be instructed to use these modified scupper plugs in the correct positions. One method is to colour code the difficult spots with a correspondingly colour marked scupper plug.[8]

The accumulated water on deck should be periodically drained after checking for the oil sheen using oil absorbent sheet. The crew shall remain at the location when the plug is removed to drain the water and the plug should be fitted immediately after draining the water. Only one scupper at one time should be drained.[9]

The vessel must carry two spare plugs for each size scupper aboard.[10]

Defective scuppers shall be discarded.[11]

When in use the scupper plug shall be secured to the railing using a lanyard to prevent it from falling overboard.[12]

When not in use the scupper plugs shall be removed and kept in a store.[13]

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2. SHIPBOARD OIL POLLUTION EMERGENCY PLAN (SOPEP)

MARPOL Annex 1, Reg 37 states that every vessel over 400 GT shall carry on board a SOPEP, which shall include ".2 - the list of authorities or persons to be contacted in the event of an oil pollution incident", and ".3[14] – a detailed description of the action to be taken immediately by persons on board to reduce and control the discharge of oil following the incident."

The Master is to ensure that the SOPEP is kept up to date and the relevant information for the countries and ports is updated as soon as received from the Company. It is recommended that the entire update be printed out and inserted in the SOPEP, as many PSC regimes do not accept the keeping of updates in electronic form only. The Master should ensure that a sheet with all relevant contact details of agents, P&I Clubs, Oil-Spill response organizations etc. is kept for each port and is maintained in the appropriate[15] Annex of the SOPEP. Regs4Ships contains the latest electronic version of Oil-Spill response organizations.[16]

The SOPEP port contact list for each port shall be posted in Bridge and ships office.[17]

3. BALLAST OVERFLOW OR RUNOFF RAINWATER[18]

An often-neglected source of pollution is accidental ballast tank overflow or the runoff rainwater from the main deck and accommodation decks of the vessel. Often this water carries hydraulic oil traces and other spilt oil containment and removal[19] products over the side. Care must be taken to ensure that the spills and leaks are correctly and completely cleaned up as soon as they occur.

Care must also be taken when pumping chain lockers and forward stores with eductor systems, oily water may be present. An oil absorbent cushion should be placed in such wells.

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