

# **MEMBER ALERT**



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## **COAL SHIPMENTS IN INDONESIA: CASES OF SELF-/OVER-HEATING**

Your Managers have recently been made aware of five incidents of overheating coal which have taken place off Kalimantan within the last two months (none of which, incidentally, involved vessels entered in the American Club), and 18 such incidents over the last two years.

The majority of cases involved the loading of low grade coal at a temperature in excess of 55°C (131°F) from a number of operators and suppliers off Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) who are shipping coal without following accepted industry best practices.

Unless loading is closely monitored, the problems are usually only seen after the cargo has been loaded and, once loaded, great difficulties can be experienced in arranging the removal of the coal due to the lack of local facilities (i.e. the availability of floating cranes and empty barges).

While there are many good shippers and mining operations in Kalimantan, it appears that some are not providing adequate cargo declarations. Some of the declarations misrepresent the cargo by either stating that the cargo is considered to be within “Category A” of the Code of Safe Practice for Solid Bulk Cargoes (BC Code) meaning it does not self-heat or emit methane; while others provide no details on the self-heating or methane-emitting properties of the coal.

The majority of coal loaded off Kalimantan is prone to self-heating. This does not mean that it is *per se* unsafe to carry, but that precautions need to be taken. Often shippers have barges waiting at sea, open to strong winds and rain, near to the anchorages – circumstances which can often promote self-heating. When loading cargo from these barges coal temperatures in excess of 55°C are often encountered.

The BC Code requires, at a minimum, that the shipper (or agent) provides cargo details, including: moisture content, sulphur content, article size, and information on whether the cargo may be liable to emit methane or to self-heat, or both.

As stated in the BC Code, vessels carrying these cargoes should have:

- an instrument for measuring methane, oxygen and carbon monoxide in the holds;
- a means of measuring the pH values of cargo bilge samples; and
- means of measuring cargo temperature during loading and the voyage (recommendatory).

In order to avoid problems of self-heating during the voyage (and possibly while loading), care should be taken to measure the temperature of the cargo prior to loading. Although not required by the BC Code, the use of a relatively inexpensive infra-red thermometer can greatly assist the crew. This allows them to ‘scan’ the surface of the cargo prior to and during loading and quickly inform the master if the temperatures are of concern.

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The master should also insist that the shipper provides a cargo declaration that is consistent with the requirements of the BC Code. According to the BC Code, the master should not load cargo without having received the required declaration.

The holds should be sealed if during loading there is a delay of more than an hour. On completion of loading, the cargo should be trimmed and the holds should be sealed in accordance with the BC Code.

Your Managers wish to thank Dr J H Burgoyne & Partners LLP for the information relating to this Alert.