



GOOD CATCH from **The American Club**

Safety Management System (SMS) Documents Blown Overboard!

(Bunkering Operations)

Description

A bulk cargo vessel catastrophically lost their safety management system's (SMS) documentation when it was blown overboard just days before an SMS audit was scheduled to occur. Some of it was recovered by the crew, but each page had to be dried out and the ink was blurred on some of the pages.

Not really!

What actually happened was a bulk cargo vessel had been bunkering. The bunker operation was planned in advance, and the Chief Engineer conducted a detailed pre-bunkering meeting to coordinate the operation.

However, the pumping rate from the bunker barge was significantly higher than planned and not approved by the Chief Engineer resulting in the bunker tanks filling faster than expected. When the engineer taking soundings determined that the fuel oil tank being filled was at 80% capacity, he assumed that another 10-15 minutes of pumping would fill the tank to the planned 90% capacity. But because of the higher pumping rate, the tank overfilled resulting in a substantial amount of fuel oil spilling out the tank vent before the pump could be shut down by the barge crew. The oil containment around the vent was overwhelmed as were the scuppers. The scupper plugs worked as intended in some locations, but in other locations they were not sufficiently snug, and oil leaked past them and down the vessel's hull into the water.

The vessel activated their oil spill response plan. The crew and local spill response resources deployed oil boom to contain the spill and numerous square absorbent pads inside the confines of the boom to soak up the oil.



Actual Damage

Approximately 900 gallons of fueled spilled on the deck and approximately half of that got into the water around the vessel. The oil spill clean-up cost was over \$275,000. That included cleaning up the

oil that was in the water, the oil on the deck of the vessel, and the oil that spilled down the hull of the vessel. It took four days to adequately clean the vessel and an additional three days to satisfactorily clean up the oil in the water.

The details are fictitious. The photos are from an IMC surveyor.

Potential Damages

The spill would have been substantially worse if the pump had not been shut down so quickly. With containment and the scuppers on the vessel already overwhelmed, all additional oil spilled would have also gotten into the water. The clean-up costs could have been much more expensive.

Prevention

- ★ Prior to the start of the operation, do you ensure a common understanding with the bunker barge crew of the desired fuel oil delivery rate?
- ★ How do you ensure that the bunkering operation is happening consistent with the bunkering plan, including the fuel oil delivery rate?
- ★ Do you verify that communications are adequate and reliable between the vessel and the bunker barge?
- ★ How do you monitor tank levels during the bunkering operation? Do you use more than one method to monitor tank levels?

When you identify a hazard before something goes wrong...

it's a Good Catch.

When you stop an operation before something bad happens...

it's a Good Catch.

When you double check that the bunkering operation parameters such as the pumping rate are consistent with the plan...

that's a Good Catch, too!



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