



# GOOD CATCH from The American Club

## Using Ocean Currents to Ship Containers (Deck Fittings, Lashings)

### Description

In the latest shipping innovation, containers are being floated directly into the North Pacific Current which will take them from Asia to the west coast of the United States. Shipping executives are applauding this brilliant approach as energy saving and a method to reduce congestion in container ports. While the containers may take several weeks to float across the Pacific Ocean, shipping executives sarcastically said it may be quicker than dealing with port congestion.

### Luckily, that's not a real story!

But containers are being lost at sea from container ships, from barges, and from non-cellular vessels carrying containers. There are several causes including incorrect container weight declarations by shippers, improper weight distributions in the stow, cargo misdeclarations, inadequate packing of cargo inside the containers, inadequate stowage plans, and inadequate cargo securing.

Great care should be taken whenever containers are loaded and secured on vessels not designed to carry containers. Particular attention should be paid to the condition of deck fittings and whether there is a sufficient number of securing points. The deck fittings may be unsuitable if poorly maintained. When deck fittings become heavily corroded, they can lose much of their strength. Additionally, the twist locks used to secure the containers to the deck fittings may not hold properly due to corrosion or wastage of the deck fitting.

The vessel may not have sufficient quantities of lashing gear. Lashing gear should be inspected frequently to ensure it is in good condition. Some vessels have tried to use alternative lashing gear that is not designed for the task or not verified to be sufficiently strong to ensure the containers remain securely stowed. When in use, lashing gear must also be checked regularly to ensure it remains tight and has not become loose due to cargo shifting and shipboard vibration.



### Actual Damage

Containers lost overboard are rarely recovered successfully. The contents are almost always a total loss.

## Potential Damages

But some containers lost overboard remain afloat for days. Since they are unlit and tend to float low in the water, they are serious hazards to navigation for both large commercial vessels and private vessels. Some containers with toxic cargos have released toxins and killed marine life.

## Prevention

- ★ Is there an adequate number of container securing points and sufficient lashing gear to properly secure the containers?
- ★ Are the deck fittings adequate for the load and anticipated dynamic forces?
- ★ What should you do if you see a deck fitting that appears to be in poor structural condition or is heavily corroded?
- ★ What should you do if the lashing gear is in poor condition or insufficient in quantity?
- ★ What training has been provided to your crews related to stowing and securing containers on non-cellular cargo vessels that do not regularly carry containers?
- ★ For non-cellular vessels carrying containers, have you reviewed and considered the American Club Alert: *The Carriage of Containers on Non-Cellular Vessels?*

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 recognize that heavily corroded deck fitting increase the risk of losing containers over the side and raise the concern...

**that's a Good Catch, too!**



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