

March 1997

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF CLASS 3 -
PROTECTION AND INDEMNITY**

The Britannia Steam Ship
Insurance Association Limited

Carriage of Coal

Members are referred to previous Group Circulars on this subject.

In September 1991 the Group circulated details of amendments to the coal entry in IMO's Code of Safe Practice for Solid Bulk Cargoes (BC Code). Subsequently, in February 1994 the Group issued a circular drawing attention to the report of IMO's Marine Safety Committee which advised of research into procedures for monitoring carbon monoxide as a means of detecting the spontaneous heating of coal. The research has now been completed, and IMO has published further amendments to the BC Code as a supplement to the 1994 edition.

IMO has recommended that Administrations and other parties concerned be made aware of the changes and has invited them to bring the amendments to the attention of shipowners, operators, seafarers, shippers, terminal operators and all other parties concerned. It will be up to individual Administrations to incorporate the new amendments into their domestic legislation.

The existing requirements state that ships transporting coal should carry on board appropriate instruments for measuring methane, oxygen and carbon monoxide in the hold atmosphere and instruments to test the pH of the bilge water samples. The new amendments add that a means should be provided for testing the atmosphere in the space above the cargo without requiring entry into the cargo space. The revised entry contains a diagram highlighting a suitable arrangement.

The BC Code also states that the instruments should be serviced and calibrated regularly and that ships' personnel should be trained in their use. Thus it is important for ships to be provided with the relevant test equipment and for seafarers to receive such training before monitoring begins. Information relating to test equipment may be obtained from the Association.

The Code re-emphasises that prior to loading, the shipper or his appointed agent should provide in writing to the master the characteristics of the cargo and the recommended safe handling procedures for loading and transport of the cargo. As a minimum, the cargo's contract specifications for moisture content, sulphur content and size should be stated, and especially whether the cargo may be liable to emit methane or self-heat.

A new entry by way of an additional Appendix G details the monitoring procedures which should be provided together with procedures for the testing of equipment. The frequency of testing will depend on the information provided by the shipper and the results of the analysis of the atmosphere in the cargo space. A rise in levels of carbon monoxide may indicate a potential heating problem and expert advice should be obtained. However, temperature measuring devices should be provided to measure the temperature of the coal during loading and during the voyage without requiring entry into the cargo space.

p.t.o.

Full details of the revised entry for coal can be obtained directly from IMO, or if Members have difficulty obtaining this information, directly from the Association. This Circular is only intended to highlight some of the requirements of the Code.

This Circular to Members supersedes all previous Circulars on this subject.