

PORT STATE CONTROL ISSUES

by Jacob Damgaard

THE FIRST PORT STATE CONTROL (PSC) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WAS SIGNED IN PARIS IN 1982 FOLLOWING THE AMOCO CADIZ DISASTER IN 1978. SINCE THAT TIME, PSC HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS A VERY EFFICIENT WAY OF REDUCING THE NUMBER OF SUBSTANDARD SHIPS AS WELL AS IMPROVING SAFETY OF SHIPS AT SEA AND PREVENTING ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE.

As a detention by the PSC authorities can be a costly affair resulting in delays and potentially loss of hire, it is important that Members' ships are ready and prepared for inspection at all times. In order to assist our Members, our Loss Prevention Department (LPD) monitors detentions by the recognised authorities, including USCG, in order to identify some of the main trends and to highlight the defects that commonly cause detentions.

Fire safety continues to be one of the main defect areas – fire dampers either not closing correctly or being corroded and fire pumps leaking or malfunctioning are frequently identified as reasons for detention. For example, a mushroom fire damper may have been successfully tested but not been visually inspected. A subsequent PSC then revealed that it was partly corroded away. For emergency fire pumps, as with all pumps, it is important to make a careful visual inspection of piping and seals to check for any leaks.

A common detention issue is the emergency generator. Often this relates to it not being able to be connected to the emergency switchboard or where it cannot take on load when connected. The USCG requires that the generator is properly connected before entering US waters. Another case found that the generator's starter batteries had gone flat, which indicated that density testing of the batteries had not been carried out correctly. Members should also be aware that in some ports

the PSC officials might ask any officer to demonstrate correct operation of the emergency generator which could lead to a detention if the correct procedure is not followed.

If, during a PSC inspection, deficiencies are raised which the master finds unjustified, it is important that he makes the PSC officer aware straight away and informs his office. For certain issues, e.g. cargoworthiness, Charterers may also need to be informed. Flag state and/or the Recognised Organisation (RO) which issued the certificate to which the deficiency is connected must be contacted as soon as possible in case of detention to initiate correct rectification and release procedures.

The LPD team have also found that several detentions could have been avoided if the defect had been reported correctly. SOLAS reg. I/11C, states that if a defect occurs in a foreign port it must be reported to the local PSC authorities as well as flag state and/or RO. This is important in order to obtain the necessary approvals to operate with a defective piece of equipment.

Avoiding detentions takes a dedicated effort by both crew and the office ashore to allocate sufficient resources in order to maintain standards and provide the necessary training for the crew. It is important that adequate testing and maintenance procedures form part of the Planned Maintenance System (PMS). The crew should understand potential 'hidden' failures of equipment, such as the corrosion of a fire damper, which might not be immediately obvious.

