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**“HOW TO DO”**

**Mauro Consultants Opinions**

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**DRAUGHT SURVEY AT ITALIAN PORTS**

by Maria Cristina Carbone and Paolo Mascardi

Draught survey is the most common method for determining the weight of bulk cargoes on board of the vessels.

Discrepancies in draught survey results between the loading and discharge may be the source of commercial disputes between the parties involved in the shipment. Often the draught survey is the basis for payment of the cargo, freight and others.

Bearing in mind that the declared quantity of any bulk cargo cannot be exactly quantified to the last grain, and that according to the Italian law the carrier is responsible for the cargo from loading up to discharge, in order to determine the quantity of cargo on board and mitigate shortage claims, the following steps are hinted and suggested:

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- Recording and if possible measuring the moisture content of the bulk cargo at loading;
- During the voyage recording very accurately the quantity of bilge water pumped out, time of ventilation of holds and cargo temperatures;
- Joint sealing/unsealing of holds before departure and upon arrival;
- Using the same methods of measuring the quantity of cargo at loading and at discharge.

Considering that normally the shore facilities and the shore scales are distant from the vessels and very often the bulk cargo in grains is conveyed by pipe lines, the most effective means is to carry out the draught survey at loading port and at discharge, preferably appointing an independent surveyor in order to check and/or to confirm the figures and findings at loading.

In case the quantity recorded on the relevant cargo documents is determined by means of draught survey, at discharging port, before hatch opening, the draught survey should be carried out in order to confirm the results at loading inviting also the cargo interests to jointly attend at the draught survey.

In case the findings of the draught surveys match or they are quite similar, the draught survey can be considered an effective means

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to oppose shortage claims for the carrier.

The shore scales and the draught survey are very different ways to determine the quantity of cargo on board. To adopt same methods of weighing can be considered more reliable and preferable than adopting different methods, namely shore scales and draught survey. Even if shore scales are certified, the weight of each shipment shall be determined and/or checked by the reading of vessel's draught carried out by a qualified marine surveyor.

The accuracy of draught surveys may vary for several reasons. In order to obtain a reliable draught survey, the following recommendations and brief hints, if applicable, should be observed:

- During the survey the vessel must be upright as much as possible and the trim has not to exceed the maximum trim reported in the vessel's stability book and ballast sounding tables;
- A boat or apposite ladders should be placed at midship and close to aft draught marks on the sea side of vessel;
- The accuracy of the draught readings is strongly based on the experience of the surveyor and the Chief Officer. Ship's officers' cooperation with the independent surveyor is a very important factor for the successful results and

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- reliability of the draught survey;
- To obtain correct results all the draught marks have to be clearly readable;
  - Trim correction tables for all tanks should be available on board of the vessels, or else all ballast tanks should be completely full or empty during the survey;
  - Accurate checking of the water density. Even if there are standard figures for the density of water, the value varies in inner harbors or rivers area and in general for brackish waters. The water density has to be always accurately determined by means of certified hydrometer;
  - The draught survey report should always include and mention any deficiency in ship's documents and/or any negative circumstance concerning weather, sea conditions which might be consequential for the draught survey results.

In case all the above recommendations and procedures are observed, the accuracy of the draught survey can range between  $\pm 0.2\%$  and  $0.4\%$ .

As concerns the weighing procedures ashore at Italian ports, when the cargo is loaded onto trucks, it may happen that one or more trucks bound to shore storing facilities, are not weighed at all or the trucks are not correctly positioned on the shore scale. To prevent

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this kind of errors, the discharging and weighing operations should be attentively checked reporting all the trucks loaded alongside the vessel mentioning the exact time of the trip of the truck and the relevant plate. In case of automatic electronic devices (conveyor scale or similar), it should be verified that the display in the control room reports not only the progressive counter but also additional information, as discharging rate, alarms, the speed of the conveyor etc. in order to try and verify whether the scale properly works.

Considering all the above, in order to protect the interests of the carrier, to conduct the draught survey is strongly recommended since its evidence is an effective means to mitigate and oppose shortage claims.

Useless to say the legal position in respect of shortage claims depends also on the contract of carriage and the evidence available.

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