

JAPAN UPDATE



David Tilsley: Safety & Loss Prevention
Executive, Standard Club
Telephone: +44 20 3320 2311
E-mail: david.tilsley@ctcplc.com

The situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant remains very serious and we recommend members remain cautious when operating ships near the affected area. Accurate and up-to-date information on radiation levels, precautions and recommendations are available from the Japanese authorities, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Flag States, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the end of this article are links to various websites that provide useful information.

Most of Japan's ports that were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami are returning to normal operations; however, there are still some ports undergoing reconstruction. Members are advised to liaise with local agents and P&I correspondents for up-to-date information on their intended ports of call, including any residual radiation risks posed to crew members and contamination of the ship.

The International Maritime Organization released circular letter No. 3175 rev. 2 on 15 April, confirming that radiation levels in Japan do not present health or transportation safety hazards to passengers and crews. See the following link for details:
<http://www.imo.org/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/3175-Rev-2.pdf>



THE EXCLUSION ZONE

- The Japanese authorities, as of 13 April, continue to advise ships to keep clear of the affected seawaters off Fukushima nuclear plant by 30km.
- Certain flag states have advised their ships previously to avoid the affected area by as much as 80km.
- Many shipowners have reacted to the crisis by implementing their own exclusion zone for their ships by as much as 150km.
- Members are recommended to conduct a risk assessment for operating their ships near the affected areas and take into account Japanese authorities requirements as well as guidance issued by the ship's Flag State.
- Some ships that have passed within 80km off Fukushima have been subject to additional port entry requirements by port state controls, including a period of quarantine at anchor resulting in lengthy berthing delays.
- The Russian Federation recently placed in quarantine a Panama flagged cargo ship that had passed near the plant and put its 19 crew members under medical supervision after detecting radiation levels three times the normal amount in the engine room.
- A ship sailing from Japan for China passed 67 nautical miles off the coast of Fukushima and upon arriving at the Chinese port, the Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau inspected the vessel and detected abnormal amounts of radiation on decks and surface of the containers that the ship was carrying. The ship was refused entry by Chinese officials.

RADIATION SCREENING PRIOR TO LEAVING JAPANESE PORTS – SHIP AND CARGO

In an effort to avoid delays and port entry refusals by foreign port state authorities, the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) recently issued guidelines on measuring the radiation levels of containers and ships in Japanese ports. Below are links to these guidelines:

- 1) Guidelines on Radiation Measurement for Export Containers in Port: <http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/000143166.pdf>
- 2) Radiation Measurement on Containers and Ships in Port: <http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/000143147.pdf>

To briefly summarise these guidelines:

- Testing is to be carried out using mobile radiation meters operated by either the shipowner or port authority.
- Sampling points include the container terminal gates and decks of ships.
- If radiation readings exceed certain limits, decontamination will take place. The criteria for decontamination are defined within the guidelines.
- If radiation levels are found to be within the normal range, a certificate or attestation will be issued confirming the method of testing carried out and the results recorded.

South Africa has recently made it compulsory for all ships calling at South African ports, which have come from Japan or are carrying cargo loaded in Japan, to make a declaration to their South African agents and the port authorities immediately. Additional countries are expected to implement similar requirements in the future; therefore, it is important to consider these requirements when visiting Japanese ports or entering Japanese waters.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHIPS TRANSITING NEAR THE EXCLUSION ZONE OR IN AFFECTED AREAS

- Monitor NAVTEX warnings issued by Japanese authorities and coastal warning broadcasts by VHF.
- Monitor NAVAREA warnings for sea areas XI(11) and XII(12) for additional guidance and recommendations.
- Keep in regular contact with the Designated Person Ashore (DPA)/ ship technical managers, port agents and correspondents, and port authorities when transiting Japanese waters.
- Monitor weather conditions especially prevailing wind conditions.



- Consider obtaining a radiation meter to measure readings on deck and from the bridge. The instrument should be calibrated correctly and procedures for its use and maintenance should be incorporated into the safety management system (SMS).
- Restrict access to the deck – non-essential work on deck should be restricted until such time as when the vessel is well clear of the affected area.
- Crew members conducting essential work on deck should be provided with facemasks and protective clothing.
- Where iodine-potassium tablets are carried on board, they should be distributed as necessary – company medical advice to be promulgated to the fleet regarding the use of such tablets, including precautions, side effects, etc.
- Consider placing the air conditioning system into recirculation mode and closing vents to the accommodation block.
- Freshwater generators should not be used when transiting near the exclusion zone or any areas affected by it.
- Strainers from the sea water chests should be cleaned, if necessary, prior to transiting Japanese waters and not while in these waters.
- Use of the fire main line should be avoided where possible when transiting near the affected areas off Fukushima.
- Restrict ballast water exchanges near the exclusion zone, particularly when the next port of call is within China or Chinese waters.
- Any clothing found to be contaminated with radiation particles to be disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Some useful websites are provided below for reference:

<http://www.imo.org/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Default.aspx>
<http://www.iaea.org/About/japan-infosheet.html>
<http://www.who.int/hac/crises/jpn/en/index.html>