

# DANGEROUS PRACTICES WITH GAUGING DEVICES ON FUEL AND LUBE OIL TANKS



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During surveys of machinery spaces, the club's surveyors have frequently noticed that self-closing weighted cocks for sounding pipes and gauge glass push buttons are being intentionally locked mechanically in the open position.



^ Weighted cap removed and screw cap off



^ Screw cap replaced by wooden plug

## WEIGHTED COCKS REMOVED AND LEFT IN OPEN POSITION WITH SCREW CAP OFF

The practice of leaving open self-closing sounding cocks by either removing the weight or by mechanically locking them open is dangerous and compromises the safety of the ship. It presents a high risk of flooding, pollution and fire; and is a serious deficiency that may lead to port state control detention.



^ Mechanically locked open level gauges



^ Mechanically locked open level gauges

## MECHANICALLY LOCKED OPEN LEVEL GAUGES

Installing a mechanical device to depress continuously the level indication button on fuel and oil tank level gauges is highly dangerous. Should a fire occur near the tanks, the gauge glass could crack and the contents of the tank would fuel the fire.

## CASE STUDY

A ship was found to have a substantial crack in the aft peak tank shell plating and a crack along the weld between the aft peak tank and an oil sludge tank located in the engine room. Water entered the aft peak tank and leaked into the sludge tank. The self-closing sounding pipe lock on the sludge tank prevented sea water from entering the engine room.

## CONCLUSION

Self-closing weighted cocks and spring loaded push button level gauges are specifically designed to close unless manually operated. DO NOT mechanically lock in the open position cocks or valves of this type.

Ask yourself how much time is saved by continuing the practice of locking open these types of devices and then think about the consequences of fire or flooding if leaving the device in that position.

If you see a self-closing weighted cock and spring loaded push button level gauge mechanically locked open DO NOT hesitate to remove and dispose of the improvised mechanical locking device.

Ensure that they are well maintained and always operated as intended.