



Bunker Protection Team Inc.

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How to Choose a Bunker Survey Correctly?

Reasons for inviting a bunker surveyor by a charterer are different, but the end purpose can be only one – to exclude losses because fuel oil expenses are a significant part of a charterer's budget.

Bunker surveys can be roughly divided into three types: conventional, detective and continuous. This article will consider the conventional bunker survey.

This type of bunker survey is the most common service which is carried out during bunkering operations to ensure a full delivery of purchased fuel.

The procedure of conducting the survey is described in many technical articles and on the websites of surveying companies.

Problems with shortage of fuel during bunkering are various, but their range is different. There is a tendency to reduce the number large fuel shortage cases, but the cases with small amounts of fuel shortage are to be found everywhere.

If the bunker barge personnel does not intend to supply a significant amount of fuel, they resort to methods of concealment such as the "cappuccino" effect, or include false information about the specific gravity of fuel oil into the bunker delivery note.

Recently, charterers placed the practice of paying for fuel oil upon delivery, which significantly limited the possibilities of manipulation by suppliers.

A clear position of a chief engineer in the matter of signing papers, based on real-derived fuels, opposes a vendor's argument that the product was

completely delivered. The crew of the vessel is only interested in the amount of fuel that is in the ship's fuel tanks, but not in the bunker barge.

Taking the measurements on the barge is only a part of the procedures, and an additional element of control to avoid unnecessary disputes after completion of the bunkering operation.

In another variant of shortfall, the bunker barge personnel act more cautiously. In fact, when conducting a fuel oil audit there is a certain margin for error allowed because of the difficulty to get perfect results of measurements due to the list and trim changing constantly during ship cargo operations.

Charterers usually accept the presence of extra fuel in the range of up to 20 tons on board. The shortage is equal to the quantity that the chief engineer has on board which is in excess of what is declared in the engine log book. There were cases of reporting this information by the surveyor to the supplier, which tend to end up in disputes.

After a dispute, the parties agree to sign the papers, introducing the amount of fuel oil with a small shortage (5-10 tons) in BDN.

This is a common practice, since writing a letter of protest generates more problems for a chief engineer, leading to subsequent bureaucratic correspondence with the office.

Unfortunately, sometimes the surveyors stay aside, leaving chief engineers to deal with the problem by themselves.

Naturally, if the vessel is all right, then her chief engineer signs a paper according to actual figures.

In the conventional bunker survey, chief engineers and suppliers are the main protagonists of the process, and if the fuel control of the vessel is carried out correctly, the role of a surveyor is just to confirm a receipt of the required quantity of fuel.

Keeping in mind the tough competition on the market of fuel supply, the following steps help in fighting with unfair suppliers:

- payment for the fuel actually delivered,

- refusing to deal with a vendor in favor of a competitor,
- bunkering the vessel to the maximum amount of fuel to avoid intermediate bunkering with a chance to instigate another dispute about the amount of fuel, as well as additional fees for survey service.

Exceeding the permissible limit of excessive fuel on board is another problem faced by charterers. This is the so-called problem of “stolen” fuel, which has spread in recent times.

Some ideas about the benefits and the difficulties of a detective survey could be found in the CL-03/2014.

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