

# Weighing containers: Is it really that difficult?

Hilton London Canary Wharf Hotel. 29 June 2010

South Quay, Marsh Wall, London E14 9SH, UK

In February 2007, the 868TEU UK-flag container vessel *Annabella* experienced a stack collapse of seven 30ft containers while on passage in the Baltic Sea. Fortunately little damage was done and no one suffered injuries but the outcome could have been catastrophic given that the top three containers in the stack were carrying Butylene Gas (IMDG Class 2.1, UN 1012).

The subsequent report by the UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was thorough, various specific failings were identified and recommendations were directed to those involved including the ship manager and the charterer. However, the terminal operators and the software suppliers were also found wanting in certain areas.

This report and a subsequent MAIB report on the loss of the 4419TEU *MSC Napoli* led to the publication by the International Chamber of Shipping and the World Shipping Council of "Safe Transport of Containers by Sea – Guidelines on Best Practices". In this, these two august bodies state categorically that overloading of a container is something which can never be condoned and go on to say that the party stuffing the container is responsible for ensuring that the gross mass of the container is in accordance with the gross mass given on the shipping documents. Furthermore, the guidelines state that terminal operators should verify the weights of incoming containers before they are loaded.

Despite this, nothing seems to be happening to ensure that weighing takes place and the container shipping industry, including all those who sail on deepsea and shortsea/feeder vessels, continue to rely on shippers being accurate and honest when they declare the weight of their cargo to the carriers. Meanwhile, seafarers' and stevedores' lives continue to be put at risk and container stacks are still collapsing, often depositing hazardous or otherwise polluting cargoes into the sea.

Freight ro-ro vessels too routinely set sail with no reliable information regarding the containers and trailers they have loaded, often at the last minute.

On land too, many of these containers are putting people's lives in peril: truck drivers and their employers have known for years that they may be running overweight because they cannot rely on the declared weights of the containers they contract to carry being accurate. Rail operators too are concerned about overloading their rail wagons.

So why aren't containers being weighed at any stage of their movement from shipper to consignee? Reports in the press cite many excuses for this inaction but few seem to have any validity. Will it take a serious accident involving fatalities before something is done?

This conference will look at the risks involved in carrying containers whose weights are at best imprecise and at worst simply unknown. Unusually, it will begin by suggesting solutions so that the 'it can't be done because.....' arguments can be debated from the outset.

The ICS/WSC guidelines were intended in part to help the industry put its own house in order before national and/or international authorities felt it necessary to intervene. Rather than just fine the road haulier, some national authorities are considering or have already passed laws that penalise those they consider are really responsible for overloaded trucks. Other countries are imposing punitive penalties on shipowners who lose containers overboard in coastal waters. Time is running out for the container industry. Action is needed now.

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# 29 June 2010 - Programme\*

\*Subject to change

- 09.10**      **Chairman's introduction**  
*David Cheslin, Managing Director, Dunelm Public Relations*
- Session One: The Solutions**  
According to "Safe Transport of Containers by Sea – Guidelines on Best Practices", a publication produced jointly by the International Chamber of Shipping and the World Shipping Council, terminals should verify the container weight against documentation by use of a weighbridge or weight gaugeload indicator on yard equipment or, alternatively, verify that weighing has occurred before entry and that such weighing was compliant with best accepted practice. So what is the best way of weighing containers?
- 09.20**      **Weighing containers using terminal handling equipment**  
According to one leading manufacturer of terminal handling equipment, products such as straddle carriers and RTGs that have been delivered in recent years are able to weigh the containers they are lifting. Furthermore, if suitably programmed, this data could be relayed to the terminal operating system. It argues that such an arrangement would allow containers to be weighed without affecting the productivity of the terminal.  
*Speaker: Ilkka Annala, Vice President, Sales, Port Cranes, Cargotec, Finland*
- 09.35**      **Twistlock technology provides solutions**  
This month, Bromma Conquip launched its own solution to the task of weighing containers without disturbing the efficient operation of container terminals. Using the spreader twistlocks to measure the load will enable detection of several hazardous situations and overweight and general weight indication will be readily available. Not only will it be possible to incorporate this capability in new spreader deliveries, it can be installed on existing spreaders. This technology also enables weight detection on individual 20ft containers when lifted in twin mode.  
*Speaker: Lars Meurling, VP, Product Business Manager, Bromma Conquip, Cargotec Sweden AB*
- 09.50**      **Linking up the software**  
With its Navis Terminal Operating System, Zebra Enterprise Solutions is the world's leading software provider to the marine container terminals industry. The company's product development experts understand it to be relatively inexpensive to cross-check actual container weights against those declared. Where there are discrepancies, data can be updated.  
*Speaker: Mark Spellane, Product Manager, Zebra Enterprise Solutions*
- 10.10**      **Checking container weights using weighbridges**  
Using a weighbridge to check container weights is another option available to terminal operators. A leading proponent of this system explains the advantages.  
*Speaker: Paul Hines, General Manager, Avery Weigh-Tronix, UK*

- 10.30**      **Discussion: dealing with misdeclared containers in the terminal**  
Many terminal operators believe that their productivity would be harmed if they had to sideline hundreds of boxes. Is that likely? Others argue that dealing with containers that are overweight could become a new source of revenue.  
*Panel to include David Wilson, Head of Health & Safety, Hutchison Ports (UK).*
- 11.00**      *Coffee Break*
- 11.20**      **Session Two: Should we trust shippers to declare the correct weights?**  
"Safe Transport of Containers by Sea – Guidelines on Best Practices" states that "overloading (of a container) is something which can NEVER be condoned" and adds "the party stuffing the container is responsible for ensuring (amongst other things) "that the gross mass of the container is in accordance with the gross mass given on the shipping documents." But can we rely on every shipper, no matter how large or how small, no matter where they are located, to make accurate declarations? Anecdotal evidence, supported by firm data such as that gathered by the MAIB, suggests not. So what should be done?
- 11.25**      **Misdeclared containers are expensive for the owner too**  
In addition to the obvious safety issues, misdeclared container weights cause owners a number of other problems. For example, when a charter vessel is down to her marks but there is still cargo on the quay, might it be because the owner has taken on too much bunker fuel or needs to carry more ballast water than anticipated? How do you explain to customers that their cargo cannot be loaded? In north/south trades where heavy cargo is prevalent, it's usually the shippers using the last port outbound that bear the brunt of this problem. Delays, disputes and lost freight can cost an owner tens of thousands of dollars on a single voyage.  
*Speaker: Steve Cameron, Principal, Cameron Maritime Resources and formerly Operations Director, OT Africa Line*
- 11.40**      **The view of an insurer**  
The leading multimodal transport insurer, the TT Club has expressed its concern about the misdeclaration of container weights. It points out that not only are ships put at risk by such practices but also trucks and trains carrying overweight boxes. It is not inconceivable that even members of the general public could be injured or killed were there to be an incident on land involving an overloaded road vehicle or rail wagon. From a risk management perspective, the industry is highly vulnerable.  
*Speaker: Peregrine Storrs-Fox, Risk Management Director, The TT Club, UK*

**12.00**      **Discussion: Anecdotal evidence**  
In the absence of any ocean carrier or carrier organisation being willing to take the platform, a panel – hopefully with audience participation - will review anecdotal evidence and discuss the question ‘Should we trust shippers?’.

**12.50**      *Lunch*

**Session Three: Carriers continue to take risks**

**14.00**      **The risks associated with misdeclared container weights**

The MAIB has carried out investigations into a large number of incidents involving UK-flag container vessels of various sizes. Stack collapses present the biggest risk but on smaller ships in particular, stability can become a real issue and in a worst case scenario, can result in the ship capsizing. The speaker, who was lead investigator in the case of *Annabella*, will look at recent incidents investigated by the MAIB including the containership *Husky Racer* and the ro-ro vessel *Riverdance*.

*Speaker: Captain Mike Evans, Inspector of Marine Accidents, UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch*

**14.20**      **What do you do if it happens to you?**

So you receive a report from the master of one of your vessels that his ship has experienced a stack collapse and some containers have gone over the side? The UK P&I Club explains what it expects its members to do and then what actions it would normally have to undertake.

The speaker will also discuss the types of claims that can be expected ranging from loss and damage to cargo and the costs of recovery of the floating, stranded and sunken containers through to legal expenses and potential fines such as those relating to the pollution of coastal waters.

*Speaker: Tarja Saikkonen, Senior Claims Executive, Thomas Miller, managers of the UK P&I Club*

**14.40**      **Revisiting Annabella**

You would think that there is not much more that can be said about the *Annabella* incident almost three years after the MAIB published its report but the organisers of this conference have been advised that similar incidents continue to happen and that the risks associated with the transport of 30ft and 45ft containers have still to be addressed.

The speaker will provide examples of recent incidents and pose the question: “What should we as an industry be doing to make it safer to transport containers on shortsea/feeder vessels?”.

*Speaker: Captain Peter H King FNI, Managing Director, Seden Clarke Ltd, UK*

**15.00**      **Discussion:**

**15.20**      *Coffee break*

**Session Four: So what should be done?**

**15.45**      **A panel discussion**

Panel to be drawn from the day’s speakers and those delegates who have expressed strong views during the course of the event.

**16.30**      **Conference closes**

# To register for Weighing Containers

Telephone: Liz Falcone/Judy Cheslin, Dunelm Public Relations Ltd +44 (0)20 7345 5232

Fax: +44 (0)20 7345 5234

E-mail: judycheslin@dunelmpr.co.uk

Mail: Dunelm Public Relations Ltd, Docklands Business Centre, 10 Tiller Road, London E14 8PX

## Delegate Details *for simplicity, you may attach your business card(s)*

### Delegate 1

Name
Job title
E-mail

### Delegate 2

Name
Job title
E-mail

### Delegate 3

Name
Job title
E-mail

### Delegate 4

Name
Job title
E-mail

Name of Company	
Address	
Postcode	Telephone

## Price and Payment Information

The delegate fee for *Weighing Containers* (to include buffet luncheon) is:

■ £300.00 + VAT per person.

*Delegate fees are subject to VAT at standard rate. VAT REG NO. GB 245 9672 26. A VAT invoice will be issued on receipt of registration.*

Enclosed is a cheque made payable to Dunelm Public Relations Limited.

Please invoice my company.

For payment by bank transfer: Dunelm Public Relations Limited, HSBC, Camberwell Green

*Sterling payments:* Sort code: 40-02-01. Account no: 61252739. IBAN: GB08MIDL40020161252739 BIC: MIDLGB2140B

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VAT registration number for EC companies not registered for VAT in the UK

## Total Payment

Delegate(s) at £352.50 (£300.00 + VAT) = £

Delegate(s) at €393.63 (€335.00 + VAT) each = €

Please note that no refund of the delegate fee is possible but substitutes are welcome at any time.

All registrations will be acknowledged by return.

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