

Dangerous anchoring in the Singapore area

The Maritime and Port Authorities of Singapore (MPA) recently called a meeting with representatives of the P&I Clubs to discuss particular problems of dangerous anchoring in the Singapore area.¹

Vessels not anchoring within Singapore port limits are, for commercial reasons, opting to anchor in outer port limit areas (OPL). The East and West OPL areas used for anchoring are, however, rather narrow spaces situated between the port limits and the traffic separation scheme (TSS) through the Singapore Strait. These areas are becoming very congested, being popular with owners for the purposes of bunkering, taking supplies, change of crew, repairs or just waiting for cargo operations. Due to the congestion, some anchored vessels are straying into the TSS, and are thus violating the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (COLREG). The MPA states that vessels in breach of COLREG Rule 10 (g) by anchoring in the TSS are being reported to their respective flag administrations. It appears from the vessels having been reported, that Singapore authorities also seem to report vessels anchored in Precautionary Areas for being in breach of COLREG.



When it comes to bunkering at Singapore, and the tendency to bunker in OPL areas, it should be noted that the risks factors concerning both bunker quality and quantity have been considered higher in OPL areas than from suppliers operating within the much more regulated port limits. There are also two bunker anchorages in the western sector of the Singapore Port, located conveniently close to the TSS, where vessels of 20,000 GT and above, staying less than 24 hours, may take bunkers at reduced port dues. Vessels other than gas tankers and chemical tankers, with a draft of 11.5 meters or less, may also be exempted from compulsory pilotage at these bunkering stations.

The MPA has also pointed to several instances of damage to subsea cables by incorrect anchoring and has alerted the P&I Clubs to this problem. When a vessel is anchoring too close to charted cables and pipelines, the owners of the cables/pipelines are informed of the vessel's particulars, to enable them to make a claim against the vessel, should any damage occur. OPL is a "loose" term, but the Eastern OPL is considered bound to the north by Johore Port limits and to the south by the westbound TSS. It should be noted that this 5 mile long area is very narrow and there are several submarine cables running the length of it.

We have also been advised that the MPA is in discussion with Malaysian and Indonesian port authorities, in order to reach an agreement for vessels anchoring in the TSS, or damaging subsea cables and pipelines, to be penalised by the State having jurisdiction over the area.

¹ Meeting between the MPA and the P&I Clubs and their representatives in Singapore, 26th June 2009.

For more information please contact Loss Prevention Manager Terje R. Paulsen, email terje.paulsen@gard.no or Loss Prevention Executive Marius Schønberg, email marius.schonberg@gard.no

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The problem of congestion of vessels off Singapore is not easy to solve, but there is always the possibility of seeking designated anchorages inside Singapore port limits. Vessels should not anchor in the TSS or Precautionary Areas, and care should be taken not to anchor too close to subsea cables and pipelines. Claims for damage caused by anchoring in way of cables and pipelines, or by dragging anchors across such equipment are very costly to the Club.

There have been a number of contact damages between ships at anchor in OPL areas during recent months, mostly in the East area. For anchoring in congested areas, full alertness is required and anchoring at night should be avoided if possible. In locations such as the congested Singapore OPLs, wind and tidal currents must be considered; an anchor watch should be kept at all times and the engine at the ready. For the time being, when anchoring off Singapore, the key message is *extreme caution*.

For further information on anchoring in general please see the following Gard publications
Gard News 193 [What if... ?' - Planning for the unexpected before an emergency develops](#)
Gard News 177 [Anchoring - Getting into a safe haven or into a potential disaster?](#)
Gard Loss Prevention Circular [No. 14-08: Anchoring and deteriorating weather conditions](#)
[Gard Guidance to Masters, section 2.14.3 Anchoring.](#)

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