

Safety Bulletin for Vessels Operating in Australian Waters

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Regarding Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin

Cargo Securing of Containers

Background & Purpose

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has recently issued a Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin, focusing on the critical issue of cargo stowage and securing. Poorly stowed and secured cargo can cause significant harm to people, vessels, the environment and other cargoes—not only at sea, but also during loading and discharge. These incidents can result in injuries, pollution, reputational damage, and clean-up costs in the tens of millions. This bulletin presents relevant information, including case studies and practical insights, to help shipowners and crew enhance safety and ensure compliance in this important area. The following are the key highlights.

Common issues

Recent AMSA inspections across ships visiting our ports have identified several areas of concern, including:

- exceeding maximum permissible container stack weights
- exceeding maximum permissible weight distributions within stacks 2021 Guidelines for Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (MEPC.340(77))
- cargo not being appropriately secured throughout voyages.

Case 1

The vessel underwent a series of heavy rolls that resulted in the loss of 50 containers overboard. The investigation found that the vessel's fixed container securing arrangements on deck were inadequately maintained and the strength of the securing fixtures were severely reduced by corrosion which compromised the effective securing of cargo. For extended periods, shipboard inspections failed to detect deteriorating condition of the vessel's deck structure and fittings.



Figure 1: Thinned, heavily wasted and failed lashing eyes (top) and wasted and failed container support structure (bottom)

Case 2

Approximately 81 containers were lost overboard and a further 62 were damaged due to heavy rolling while the vessel was enroute to Sydney. The investigation found that (amongst other factors):

- the calculated resultant forces on the weights and distribution of containers in two bays exceeded the allowable force limits specified in the ship's cargo securing manual.
- The cargo planning process ashore did not ensure that the proposed container stowage plan complied with the stowage and lashing forces requirements of the ship's cargo securing manual.
- The master and chief mate did not check that the proposed container stowage plan complied with the cargo securing manual.
- Apart from on-the-job training and mentoring, there was no evidence to indicate that the officers had been trained in the use of the loading computer system or the lashing calculation program.



Figure 2: Damaged containers

Strategies to prevent container loss

1. **Maintaining and monitoring cargo securing arrangements:** Ensure that securing devices are in good condition and maintained in accordance with the inspection and maintenance plan set out in the securing manual. Regular inspections should be carried out, and during the voyage, crew should continuously monitor cargo securing arrangements to ensure lashings remain tight and secure.
2. **Procedures and training:** Management should regularly review manuals and procedures to ensure they are up to date, effective, and consistent with actual shipboard practices. Training should be provided to ensure that crew members are familiar with, and able to apply, the contents of the approved cargo securing manual in accordance with their duties on board.
3. **Preparing for weather and sea conditions:** Most container losses occur under adverse weather conditions. Crews should be reminded to receive weather forecasts and navigational warnings in a timely manner, to assess sea conditions in advance and to develop safe routing. In the event of heavy weather, reference may be made to IMO MSC.1/Circ.1228, which provides guidance for masters on avoiding dangerous situations.

Concentrated Inspection Campaign

Australia, along with member Authorities of the Tokyo and Indian Ocean MOUs continue to identify issues relating to improper cargo securing and stowage. A concentrated inspection campaign is planned to be conducted by both MOUs in relation to cargo securing and stowage in 2026, in collaboration with the Paris MOU.

Key messages

- Safety management systems should capture, and address risks associated with cargo.

- Introduce specific measures and controls to mitigate risks effectively
- The risk assessment should capture risks involving heavy weather navigation, including precautions to prevent the loss of cargo, and ensure appropriate checklists are available.
- Effective weather routing, based on the latest available weather information, should be undertaken.
- Regularly review the risks and control measures to ensure the controls remain effective and up to date, in light of new information or a change in operational condition.
- The ship's crew must be familiar with the approved cargo securing manual.
- Cargo securing equipment and fittings should be regularly inspected and maintained.
- Containers must be stowed and secured in accordance with the approved cargo securing manual and the crew should check this before signing off on cargo load.

References

Australian Transport Safety Bureau (2022) Marine Occurrence Investigation Report – Loss of containers overboard from APL England. 16 December 2022.

https://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2020/mair/351-mo-2020-002

Australian Transport Safety Bureau (2022) Marine Occurrence Investigation Report – Loss of containers overboard YM Efficiency. 13 February 2020.

https://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2018/mair/344-mo-2018-008

Dutch Safety Board (2020) Investigation Report - Safe container transport north of the Wadden Islands Lessons learned following the loss of containers from MSC Zoe. June 2020.

https://safety4sea.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Dutch-Safety-Board-Safe-container-transport-north-of-the-Wadden-Islands-Lessons-learned-following-the-loss-of-containers-from-MS-C-ZOE-2020_06.pdf

Attachment

- *Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin Issue #22 September 2025 Cargo Securing of Containers*
- *MSC.1-CIRC.1228*

CCS Australian Office

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Disclaimer:

1. The purpose of this document is to assist shipping companies in promptly understanding AMSA inspection requirements and better complying with relevant regulations in Australian waters.
2. For detailed information, please visit the AMSA website at www.amsa.gov.au or the CCS website at www.ccs.org.cn.
3. The content of this document does not replace any provisions of CCS rules, applicable conventions, AMSA regulations, or those of other competent authorities.