Condition Survey - Guidance Notes for Surveyors

The purpose of a Condition Survey is to:

Satisfy the Managers of the Club that the vessel is in a fit condition for entry, and/or
Identify defects that are likely to expose the Owner and the Club to P&I claims

It is therefore essential that a thorough survey is conducted and that the findings are reported in a concise and uniform manner.

The Owner will have been informed well in advance of the requirement for the survey and should notify the Master and the agent that this is to take place. The Club will include the agents’ details in its instructions, and the surveyor should liaise with the agent and/or any other local representative of the owner who may be present – e.g. a superintendent - to arrange a suitable time to attend. In the event of the surveyor experiencing any difficulty in conducting the survey, the Managers’ London Representatives should be contacted immediately.

The Club expects surveyors to report in a two-stage process. A Summary Report is to be submitted within 24 hours of attending the vessel that is the subject of the survey. The Formal Report should be submitted within 14 days of attendance.

Summary Report

The Summary Report (which can be downloaded from the Club’s website) is to be completed immediately after the initial attendance(s) aboard the vessel. An MS Word report should be completed and emailed to the Club, together with a list of deficiencies noted during the survey, and details of the remedial action necessary to rectify them. During a follow-up survey the status of the defects found during the initial survey is to be reported as either completed, in progress or outstanding. Items are not to be deleted or re-numbered on the list of deficiencies and any additional items found during the survey are to be added to the end of the applicable section of the list.

Formal Reports

The Formal Report or the Reactivation Survey Report (both of which can be downloaded from the Club’s website) for vessel being reactivated from lay-up, should be completed and forwarded to the Club within 14 days of completion of the survey. Comprehensive comments should be made in respect of the various items or areas inspected, and the surveyor should not feel constrained to limit the commentary to fit the space in the standard form. This can and should be expanded as necessary.

The format of the Formal Report is such that most of the pages are designed to cover items considered common to all types of vessel, i.e. hull, machinery, classification, safety and navigation, and shipboard management. Additional and optional pages are provided and should be used as applicable to the particular type of vessel that is being inspected – e.g. tanker, container vessel, passenger vessel etc.
Formal reports are to be issued electronically ideally as an MS Word file or alternatively as a PDF file. Photos included in the formal report should include an overview of the vessel and her holds, tanks, decks and fixtures and fittings. So far as possible photos should also be included of all defects found or rectified defects, and again, so far as possible, photos of tests conducted should be included.

Photographs should have captions, which describe the condition(s) that they illustrate. The captions should be on the same page as the photographs, not listed elsewhere, so that those reading the report and looking at the photographs are immediately aware of the condition that is being illustrated.

As can be seen from the format, the survey is comprehensive. It not only covers the condition of the vessel’s structure, but also considers its maintenance, cargoworthiness, and the way in which it is manned and operated, particularly with reference to safety and pollution prevention.

The surveyor should review the latest steel thickness gauging/ultrasonic test reports and comment, in his report, on areas where excessive wear down/diminution of thickness have occurred.

A vessel's cargoworthiness is of great concern to the Club, and the surveyor should give this aspect of the survey special consideration. Close liaison should be maintained with the vessel’s agent to ensure that the survey is conducted at a time when its effectiveness will be maximized, and particularly such that tests for cargoworthiness can be completed as fully as possible. In dry cargo vessels - test hatch covers for weathertightness, pressure test ballast tank tops and test hold bilges. (Ideally, hatch covers should be tested with ultrasonic equipment, provided the surveyor is experienced and qualified to undertake this work, and the equipment is approved by Class.) Representative testing is acceptable, but should be extended if defects are found. Further guidance on determining cargoworthiness specific to various vessel types is set out in the following documents (all of which can be downloaded from the Club’s website):

- Cargoworthiness (Dry Cargo)
- Cargoworthiness (Bulk Carriers)
- Cargoworthiness (Dry Cargo – Specialised Ships)
- Cargoworthiness (Tankers)
- Cargoworthiness (Gas Tankers)

Ballast tanks should be inspected internally. Representative inspection is acceptable. However, the surveyor should nominate the tanks that are to be surveyed.

It is not necessary to include photocopies of class and statutory certificates (the dates are shown in the report), conditions of class (a brief summary of any should be included) or ultrasonic test reports of steel thickness gauging (details of excessive thinning should be given). The surveyor should however retain photocopies of these documents in case any queries are necessary.

All completed surveys should be sent to the Condition Survey team at: ship.surveys@simsl.com
Should further information be required concerning Condition Surveys and the manner in which they should be conducted, the above address can also be used for this purpose.

If, for some reason tests for cargoworthiness cannot be conducted, e.g. the vessel is not cargo-free, the surveyor should note this in his report. He should also state why these tests could not be held and clearly state that any comments concerning the vessel's cargoworthiness are based on a visual inspection only.

Tests should also be made of the following equipment, whenever possible; oily water separator(s) and associated alarm(s); emergency steering gear and bridge/steering flat communications; emergency fire-pump; emergency generator; life saving and firefighting equipment, including fire-flaps; life-boat(s) swung out etc. This list is not exhaustive.

The list of deficiencies is split into three sections. The first section details defects which are a concern from the P&I risk perspective and will need to be rectified to the satisfaction of the Club. The second section details recommendations which although not of concern from the P&I risk perspective may be of interest to the vessel / owner. All tests, requirements and inspections that are outstanding upon completion of the survey are to be listed in the third section of the list of deficiencies.

All defects or recommendations which require rectification should be included in this list. They should not be omitted simply because they relate to matters that might not be expressly covered by any of the headings in the summary report format. A copy of this list is to be given to the Master before the surveyor leaves the vessel.

Items should be numbered consecutively from 1 to however many are found within each section of the list of deficiencies.

The surveyor should not set a period within which defects should be completed. This is a matter for the Club. However, if the surveyor considers that a defect needs urgent attention, e.g. before the vessel sails, he should draw this to the Master’s attention and inform the Club by email, in a note to accompany the Summary Report.