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Winter navigation at Azov sea in ice conditions – Winter 2009/2010

Azov sea is a marine operated area where seasonal sea ice plays an important role in navigation. The Azov sea freezes annually and the ice season lasts up to 4-5 months from November to March.

A growing number of accidents and casualties have reportedly been occurred during navigation at Azov sea in ice conditions in the recent years (*from a substantial hull damage to a constructive total loss*). In the run-up to the approaching winter navigation 2009/2010 at Azov sea in ice conditions we would like to emphasize on the most characteristic features of such navigation:

- The sea water freezing point of the brackish water of Azov sea is about 0,4 C. The ice thickness is about 0,5 0,7 mtr in an average winter. The biggest obstacles to winter navigation are ridges which are normally thicker than the level ice and are difficult to penetrate. Channels with thick side ridges and thick brash ice in the middle are formed when the ice cover in the fairway is repeatedly broken and frozen. The side ridges make passing of other vessels very difficult. Ridges also form when winds push ice together.
- The beginning and the end of ice navigation at Ukrainian Azov ports is stated in the formal order issued by the Mariupol Harbour Master. The Ice Operations Headquarter headed by the Mariupol Harbour Master direct ice operations.
- Ice navigation is permitted for ice-classed vessels or at least with the confirmation of Classification society to navigate in the concrete ice conditions in each particular case.
- The ice breaker convoy is a compulsory requirement for navigation in ice conditions at Azov Sea. The decision to admit the vessel for the navigation in the ice breaker convoy is taken by Ice Operations Headquarter on the basis of assessment of combinations of factors as ship's particulars, her technical characteristics and the current ice condition. The waiting time for formation of ice breaker convoy is about 10- 20 days.
- If a vessel is not admitted to be included in the ice breaker convoy she will not be allowed to inward/outward passage. It becomes the matter of great importance for ships entered to the port before the outset of ice navigation. Up to 7 10 vessels each year were forced to wait at Mariupol port even at laden condition till ice navigation is over.
- There is no Ukrainian statutory requirement for a ship to be weather routed when navigating in Azov Sea in ice condition. But the Master may obtain and monitor the weather reports from

Mariupol Commercial Port website <u>www.marport.net</u> or can be provided with the ice report showing the current ice conditions of the Azov sea by their agent

- The Master must submit a written application for an ice-breaker convoy to the Harbour Master. In the application the Master should state the vessel's documents allowing her navigate in ice conditions (Ice Class or Ice Strengthening), her seaworthiness, scantling details, screw material, kind and quantity of cargo on board, actual draft, main engine power, speed in open waters, Radars and VHF condition, fuel oil, fresh water and provisions on board. For each vessel provided with Mariupol port Ice Operations Headquarter's permission to enter into Azov Sea the Shipowner must submit a written confirmation that the Master had been acquainted with ice conditions and his acceptance to follow the ice-breaker at Master's own risk.
- Applications for all kinds of ice-breaker services should be filled in 48 hours before approaching the luminous Buoy No.1 of Kerch Strait, or in 24 hours before leaving the port.
- Ships ingoing convoy is formed at the ice edge of Azov Sea as per instructions given by the Master of the ice-breaker and in accordance with the Ice Headquarter plan.
- The ice convoy from Kerch is for vessels bound for Mariupol but it could be included vessels bound for Berdyansk, Ukraine. Those vessels are going with convoy up to the Berdyansk bank's abeam and then they turn to left and proceed without ice-breaker assistance which causes frequent case of ship's blocking in ice and even running ships' aground to the fairway's edge.

Recommendation:

Where there is any possibility for the vessel being sent to any Azov sea port which is ice-bound on her arrival or where the onset of ice may cause the Master to decide to leave the port before cargo operations are completed the suitable ICE Clause should be included in the charter party and in bills of lading.

We will timely notify the Club when the Mariupol port Harbour Master issues the formal notification on ice navigation in Ukrainian Azov sea waters.

Should You or your Members/Assureds require additional information regarding Azov Sea and ports ice condition please do not hesitate to contact us any time.

Very truly yours,

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