



Stowaways - Preventing danger, preventing cost



This Risk Alert has been written by Captain Ken Robson, of the Loss Prevention Team

Stowaways can be an expensive and time consuming problem for members and the Club. Increasingly, stowaways frequently take great risks with their own lives and ships should not underestimate their determination and resourcefulness. Some recent cases the Club has been involved in have highlighted the dangers stowaways pose for ships crews as well as the delays and expense a member can expect if stowaways are found on their ship.

In January 2019 a Steamship member reported finding three stowaways on board during a voyage from Lagos to the United States. The ship reported they had exercised Marsec 1 precautions in Lagos, due to the known problems of stowaways in that port, but despite extensive precautions by the crew, unfortunately their efforts were not good enough and stowaways were found 3 days after leaving port. When approached by the crew the stowaways were initially aggressive, but even so, a request to disembark them at Cape Verde was denied by the Cape Verde authorities. The Master and crew ensured the stowaways were allocated suitable accommodation and food, whilst at the same time ensuring their own safety. As well as their routine duties, the Master and crew had to spend additional time supervising and monitoring the stowaways. With uncertainty about what position the US authorities would take, three guards had to be sent from the UK to the US, causing further cost for the Member, although in the end they were not needed. Additionally Members had to pay for the US Coast Guard security team who boarded the vessel and for five armed guards to be on board. The stowaways were removed and it is believed they claimed asylum. Their asylum application will take several months to conclude and if it fails, members will have to pay for their repatriation.



It is thought the stowaways gained access to the vessel by climbing on to the stern ramp and hiding in its steel framework. Members have since arranged for razor wire to be placed on the stern ramp and will purchase a small boat to be lowered before departure as part of their departure checks.



Another case in December 2018 was widely reported in the British press and underlines the difficulties that stowaways can pose. Four stowaways, believed to have boarded in Lagos, were found on the “Grande Tema” on its approach to the UK. It was reported that special forces from the Royal Navy had to be deployed following allegations of an assault on the vessel’s crew. The Navy team boarded the vessel and detained the stowaways. Happily nobody was injured.

In both of these cases, the stowaways were allowed to disembark, but that does not always happen. Many jurisdictions do not allow stowaways to be disembarked, meaning they have to stay on the ship until a suitable disembarkation point can be found. The Club occasionally sees cases of African stowaways on ships bound for South America. Stowaway repatriation from South America is time consuming and expensive. Many states do not have direct air links with Africa and so require visa applications for stopover airports. Airlines are sometimes reluctant to take stowaways because of their reputation for causing disruption. Argentina for example usually requires the plane carrying the stowaways to have taken off before the ship will be allowed to sail, meaning potentially considerable delays for the ship.



STEAMSHIP MUTUAL Risk Alert



In September 2017, Steamship published a case study outlining the problems faced by a Member when two Moroccan stowaways were found on board an entered vessel. It took 50 days until the stowaways could be sent home, leading to expense and difficulties in numerous jurisdictions. The article “A case study: Stowaways – what to do when it is already too late?” [can be read here](#).

Prevention

Many difficulties can be avoided if ships carry out satisfactory stowaway monitoring precaution. Steamship has published various articles over the years and they can be seen on these links on the Steamship website.

South Africa: [Risk Alert re stowaway risk in Durban](#), South Africa

South Africa: [Article from March 2018](#) about stowaways at South African Ports

Nigeria: [This article](#) from 2017 highlighted some of the issues a member may encounter in Nigeria, and includes a section on stowaways.

Senegal: [Security measures required for stowaway prevention in Dakar, Senegal](#)

Brazil: Club correspondents Proinde published this document “[Practical Guidance and Statistical Review](#)”

Information available on the Team Effort App

The “Team Effort” App contains very useful information about stowaway prevention, all easily accessible in the free to download App. You can find:

- A claim handling guide outlining what to do if stowaways are found
- Questionnaires in English, Swahili, Arabic, French Portuguese
- A link to Standards and recommended practices for dealing with stowaways have been adopted as amendments to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention)
- Remember the Team Effort App is available in 7 languages.

Should Members have any questions regarding this Risk Alert please contact the Club’s [Loss Prevention Department](#).

