

Carriage of methanol – dangerous goods – without proper certification

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The vessel which carried out the work was not in possession of a Dangerous Goods Document of Compliance.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Work authorisation

What happened?

Methanol was being transported from place to place offshore, without appropriate Dangerous Goods certification. Methanol is very flammable. The incident occurred during the refuelling of a LIDAR buoy at an offshore wind farm. This involved carrying methanol cannisters on board a vessel, recovering the buoy, loading the methanol into the buoy, and redeploying the buoy. The vessel which carried out the work was not in possession of a Dangerous Goods Document of Compliance.

What went wrong?

The vessel had standard FFE/LSA as a workboat but was ill-equipped to carry over 700 litres of methanol.

The principal contractor who hired the vessel did not include carriage of methanol in a Risk Assessment and Method Statement and had cleared the vessel through their own vetting department. The issue was raised internally by the client who recorded it as a High Potential Near Miss given the flammable and toxic properties of methanol.

Further investigation found that that this was “not an isolated incident” and that the use of workboats and smaller vessels to carry Class 3 DG for the purpose of refuelling LIDAR buoys had occurred in the industry with other developers.

What was the cause?

There was no intent to mislead. The root cause seemed to be lack of awareness. Our member noted that amongst certain of their suppliers there was a perceived lack of awareness of the hazards posed by Dangerous Goods and of marine operations in general.

Actions

What lessons were learnt?

- Carriage of Methanol requires a DG DOC (or flag state exemption with

certain mitigations in place).

- LIDAR buoys, when fully fuelled, are themselves classed as DG, and as such, ought to be carried only by vessels with DG DOC (as above).
- The offshore renewables industry has not fully appreciated the hazards of marine operations and the carriage of DG. See below, “Members may wish to refer to”.
- Importance of raising awareness within the offshore renewables industry, and also within the maritime industry, to remind vessel owners, vessel crew, charterers (including offshore renewable developers) of the requirements for the carriage of DG cargoes.

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