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Marine

Onboard barge audit helps tighten bunker supply chain

The Quality Management for Bunker Supply Chain covers the entire management system from product procurement to delivery of bunker to vessels in the port of Singapore. Certification bodies, in turn, conduct surveillance audits onboard bunker barges to tighten the procedures of the supply chain.

In the port of Singapore, the quality of delivered bunkers to vessels depends very much on the procedures in the bunker supply chain.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has orchestrated several initiatives to help spur the bunker market forward and maintain its regional competitive status. In June 2003, the MPA launched the Accreditation Scheme for Bunker Suppliers (ASBS) that incorporates the Technical Reference (TR 8:2003), or Quality Management for Bunker Supply Chain (QMBS), where bunker suppliers are given two years to conform to the bunker supply chain management system.

Back in 2002, trouble brewed when a number of bunker suppliers and bunker craft operators were found to be involved in the sales of contaminated bunkers to ships, and accepting bribes during the course of duty in bunkering activities.

The MPA stepped in and suspended bunkering licences from a number of bunker suppliers and bunker craft operators. Bunker surveyors were also not

audit once a year, and renew the TR 8:2003 certificate once every three years. The management system for bunker supply chain therefore covers the entire

of a non-conformity, the company will be given a specific time frame to correct it. Once it has submitted the correction and accepted, the certification body should be able to issue the certification."

If the bunker supplier fails to rectify and conform with the standard within the stipulated time frame given, SGS will have to withdraw the certificate and inform SAC. "So far we have not encountered such cases," said Liew.

PSB, on the other hand, would issue a 'red card' for major non-conformity and a 'yellow card' for minor non-conformity. PSB requires its client to rectify any non-conformities within one month, after which the certification body might hang up the supplier's certificate. Thus far, PSB has yet to issue any 'red cards' for major non-conformities.

SGS's lead auditor Khaw Swee Beng noted that the main areas of non-conformity typically lie in incomplete documentation of paperwork, which needs astute attention due to the stringent requirements of the Singapore Standard for Bunkering (SS CP60). "Over the past three years, it [documentation of paperwork] seems to be improving," said Khaw.

The TR 8:2003, or Technical Reference, has been made available for provisional application over a period of two years before it is up for review to be converted to a Singapore Standard.

Users of the Technical Reference are invited to comment on its technical content in terms of user-friendliness and areas of ambiguities or anomalies. At the end of a two-year period, the Technical Reference will be reviewed by the QMBS working group to discuss the comments received and to determine its suitability as a Singapore Standard.

The TR 8:2003 on QMBS, unique to the Singapore bunkering market, helps to ensure that the quality of bunkers supplied to vessels conform to, or is better than, the standards stipulated under the ISO 8217.

"There are some other standards or certification products that might not be provided in Singapore," said Cres Maramot, managing director Singapore/Malaysia of SGS. "However, we continuously evaluate market needs to see which of these other standards can be offered in Singapore."

Maramot believes a number of opportunities are opening in the market in areas of bunker fuel testing, storage and terminal management. "Our capability in bunker fuel testing is pretty much in tune with the testing requirements of the industry. If there are new standards or testing requirements coming up, we are more than happy to evaluate the needs and invest on infrastructure and equipment as necessary," he said.

SGS employs a so-called 3D method in conducting its bunker barge audit checks. The three Ds include demonstration, description and documentation.

spared from conviction with their involvement in the bribery incidents.

Against the backdrop of previous malpractices, the implementation of QMBS requires every certified bunker supplier to undergo a bunker barge surveillance

management system from product procurement to delivery of bunker to vessels in the port.

Singapore houses four certification bodies that conduct the surveillance audits onboard bunker barges for the local accredited bunker suppliers. They are: Certification International, Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance, PSB Certification (PSB) and SGS International Certification Services Singapore (SGS).

A bunker barge audit will consist of personnel from a certification body, the client's cargo officer and its quantity management representative, while bunker surveyors are optional. An auditor from the Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC) will be present once a year to ensure the certification bodies are carrying out their checks in accordance to the procedures laid out under the TR 8:2003.

SGS employs a so-called 3D method in conducting its bunker barge audit checks. The three Ds include demonstration, description and documentation. "[The clients] will demonstrate and describe to us how they do it, and to show us through their documentation that they have from the past been doing the same things," according to Liew Nyuk Sing, SGS's certification manager.

SGS believes in keen observation during the audit process. "For the auditing process, we emphasise our value add, which comes from observation. First, we see whether they have complied to the standard. During the auditing process, we will suggest and recommend, which is the value add to our customers," said Liew.

"We go down to the barge and tanker to observe how the operators carry out the delivery process," he said. "There are certain calculations and procedures on how to measure the quantity of bunkers. The clients have to demonstrate to the auditors how they calculate and be able to brief the auditors how they establish that quantity (of bunker fuel)."

Said Darajit Daud of SGS: "In the event



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