

NATIONAL CARGO BUREAU
ICONS SUBMISSION
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National Cargo Bureau was founded by the U.S. Coast Guard as a not-for-profit company in 1952. The purpose for the company was and is to assist with the safe loading of merchant ships at U.S. ports. In fulfilling our responsibilities, we conduct thorough inspections of cargo spaces aboard many ships, particularly those vessels engaged in the "dry" trades.

On approximately five percent, or one in twenty ships inspected, we note serious deficiencies. The most frequent are holes in the hatch coamings, hatch covers or main deck. When such conditions are noted, the proper authorities are duly informed. This is usually a classification society. At such times, certificates of readiness will not be issued until the repairs are made and we have received written approval by the classification society.

It would appear the industry is plagued by problems such as poorly maintained and operated ships because we have little enforcement of regulations or industry standards. There are actually many potential regulators of our industry. In addition to flags and port states, there are the potential regulators such as shippers, freight forwarders, insurers, ship owners and/or operators who could all, collectively or independently be regulators in the manner in which they choose to do business. If we are to have safe ships, someone must take a stand.

Sad to say, the reason for this ever increasing competition and relaxation of standards is because there is little enforcement of regulations. The Coast Guards of the maritime nations can only accomplish so much with their limited resources. Very few nations adequately support their Coast Guards with budgets equal to the tasks. It seems governments don't believe in spending their resources on the safety of ships flying foreign flags or mariners hailing from foreign lands.

We have an International Maritime Organization which has authored numerous codes and regulations. Most all maritime nations agree to these IMO instruments, however have little interest in assuring compliance. The situation is similar to declaring a 55-mile-an-hour speed limit and not budgeting the police to write a summons for speeding. If we know there is no penalty for speeding, the speed limit will be ignored.

The maritime industry today experiences competition at all levels. Frequently, the competition is destructive; being based on commercial principles, the lowest cost provider is usually the winner. As there is little enforcement of many regulations, safety is sacrificed for the bottom line. It seems a shame that we have not been able to solve our problems. National Cargo will continue doing its part in attempting to make seafaring a safer profession and ships safer workplaces.

James J. McNamara
President
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