

Provisional Local Vessel Advisory Committee

Vessels Lie Alongside a Ship

Purpose

This paper aims to seek members comments and endorsement to revise the restricted tiers of local vessels lying alongside a ship as proposed in para. 12 below.

Background

2. Regulation 45(3) of the Shipping and Port Control Regulation, Cap.313 sub.leg. (reg. 45(3)) stipulates the conditions of how many tiers of licensed vessels may lie alongside at different parts of a ship. It was enacted in 1978 and no amendment was made.

3. The contents of reg. 45(3) are as follows -

Vessels to which Part IV of the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance applies may lie alongside a ship -

- (a) not more than 3 abreast at the gangway of the ship;
- (b) not more than 5 abreast at other parts on either side of the ship;
- (c) not more than 4 abreast alongside if the ship is moored at any wharf;
- (d) not more than 2 abreast alongside if the ship is moored at No.5 North Berth of the Hong Kong Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company.

Present Situation

4. It is not uncommon to see a ship, which is being moored to Government mooring buoy or anchored in the western harbour, tied with a group of non-mechanized cargoes barges like a “Christmas tree”. Sometimes, it is even worse that you may not be able to see the ship when it is totally surrounded by tiers of huge barges loaded with stacks of containers.

5. According to our records, there are about 930 non-mechanized cargoes barges licensed in Hong Kong. More than half of these barges are with overall length of more than 40 metres and extreme breath of more than 15 metres. If a ship lay with 5 tiers of such barges alongside on either side, the total breath of the “Christmas tree” may be up to 100 metres.

6. Such “Christmas tree” will obstruct the passage of the other vessels and significantly increase the risk of the ship as it is prone to drag its anchor or even break its mooring chain. If any accidents happened, it will take a considerable time to separate all tied up vessels from the ship. Moreover, not only the ship and the tied up vessels are exposed to a high risk, other vessels and port facilities in the vicinity may be endangered.

Review of the Regulation

7. As the control of local vessels will be consolidated and updated under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance, Cap.548 (MS(LV)O), reg. 45(3) will be repealed and re-enacted under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulation, Cap.548 sub.leg. (MS(LV)(G)R). Therefore, it is an appropriate time to review the regulation.

8. Under the MS(LV)O, local vessels will include Mainland coastal and river-trade vessels. As we have no intention to prohibit Mainland coastal and river-trade vessels to moor alongside a ship at a wharf, pier or terminal, the application of the regulation should be extended to cover them. Otherwise, Mainland coastal and river-trade vessels will not be controlled in this aspect.

9. In view that the berth of the Hong Kong Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company is no longer existed, the provision of reg. 45(3)(d) is a redundant provision.

10. To remove the adverse situation mentioned in paras. 5 and 6 above, the restricted tiers of local vessels should be reduced and standardized. On the other hand, the reduction of the tiers should not adversely affect normal cargoes operation and its efficiency. As the first tier is normally for cargoes operation, the second tier for cargoes transferring and the third tier for standing by, allowing 3 tiers of local vessels lying alongside a ship will be sufficient to achieve efficient cargoes operations.

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11. In case of a ship moored at a wharf, pier or terminal, the restricted number of tiers lying alongside should adopt the same requirement of the redundant provision at para.

9 above, i.e. not more than 2 abreast alongside the ship. The third tier is considered not desirable as the size of a modern ship is larger and navigable waters around most of wharfs, piers and terminals are limited. Also, such tier is unnecessary as main cargoes operation should be conducted across the land and the ship.

Proposal

12 In light of the rationales mentioned in paras. 8 to 11 above. It is proposed that the number of restricted tiers should be not more than 3 abreast alongside at any parts of the ship. However, in the case of a ship moored at a wharf, pier or terminal, the number of restricted tiers should be not more than 2 abreast alongside at any parts on seaward side of the ship.

Implication

13. There may be a minor implication to some cargoes operators if they are used to lie more tiers than the proposed requirements in their practice. However, it is expected that normal cargoes operations and its efficiency will not be affected.

14. As reg. 45(3) will be repealed by a consequential amendment made in the MS(LV)O and the proposed requirements will be enacted in the MS(LV)(G)R by SES, only SES's policy support is required.