



THE STEAMSHIP MUTUAL  
UNDERWRITING ASSOCIATION (BERMUDA) LIMITED

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To the Members

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Dear Sirs,

**STOWAWAYS**

In recent months there has been a dramatic increase in the number of stowaway incidents involving the use of containers, culminating earlier this year in the discovery of 58 dead stowaways in a trailer lorry at the port of Dover. Several Clubs within the International Group have dealt with cases involving Chinese stowaways being placed on board container ships in sealed containers at the port of Hong Kong, destined for North American ports. This recent development has attracted the attention of the United States Coastguard, Immigration Authorities and Federal Bureau of Investigation, all of whom are putting considerable pressure on carriers to demonstrate that they are dealing with the problem.

In view of this increased activity, the following guidelines are recommended for all container operators. Whilst the guidelines are specifically aimed at container operators, the recommended precautions are equally valid for other operators, including those carrying vehicles such as trailer lorries.

Prior to Terminal

Carriers are recommended to make further enquiries and take extra precautions at the time shipments are booked. Particular attention should be paid to the following:

- Trade patterns which have been the subject of past problems.
- Previously unknown shippers; company searches may be appropriate.
- New trading areas.
- Requests for empty containers to be delivered to insecure areas.
- Loaded containers collected from insecure areas.
- Open-topped containers, which should be inspected prior to acceptance.
- Lightweight shipments.
- Shipments in reefer containers set at relatively high temperatures.

At Terminal (prior to loading)

- In appropriate areas co-operation should be sought from local Immigration Authorities; their experience may be an essential asset.
- Carriers should emphasize to terminal operators the need for dialogue and co-operation in combating the ease with which stowaways are able to access containers due for shipment.
- Any containers presented for loading with no seals, faulty or tampered seals should be opened and checked before being re-sealed.
- All reefer containers with settings above, say, 10° centigrade should be opened and checked for stowaways.
- All open top containers should be inspected, particular attention should be given to any containers with signs of recent repair, repainting etc.
- Particular attention should be paid to containers that arrive in the terminal late after the cut-off period and shortly before vessel loading commences. This tactic might be used to reduce the opportunity for detection and would also reduce stowaways' length of confinement.
- Consider the deployment of CO<sub>2</sub> detectors, heat detectors, sniffer dogs, and/or heartbeat detectors. Methods of detection will vary from terminal to terminal. Agreement should be sought with each operator.
- Pay particular attention to any containers received from outside locations and especially from insecure uncontrolled areas.
- Containers for which obvious weight discrepancies exist should be identified and if necessary searched.

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