

Message for shipowners for ships from Japan or ships carrying containers from Japan wishing to call at Rotterdam

The problems with the nuclear reactors in Fukushima have led to the spread of radioactive (RA) material in a sizeable area of Japan, including the Bay of Tokyo. It is possible that RA particles have become attached to cargo and ships, potentially forming a health risk for those people who come into direct contact with them. One can think here of personnel who perform work that involves intensive contact with ship's parts or cargo, among others. They run the risk of contact contamination via the skin or through inhalation. Both can easily be prevented by taking a number of (hygiene) measures.

Risk-reducing measures that can be taken are:

- Cleaning parts of ship and cargo that have been exposed in Japan to the air, rainwater, sea water and suchlike.
- Providing good information to port personnel regarding the actual nature of the health risks and the importance of good personal hygiene.
- Taking measurements to establish whether or not the ship or cargo is contaminated with radioactive particles which could be related to the problems with the nuclear reactors.

The Dutch authorities in general and the (State) Harbour Master of Rotterdam in particular adopt the attitude that the shipowner bears primary responsibility for the ship, the ship's crew and the cargo calling in the Netherlands. This also involves the shipper or the carrier taking measures to prevent RA-contaminated cargo from being delivered.

As an extra precaution, the Harbour Master will have measurements taken on arrival in the port. In this way, it will be ascertained whether or not the ship or cargo are sufficiently free from radioactive particles that could be related to the problems with the nuclear reactors. The measurement will be carried out on ships coming from Japan or ships carrying cargo from Japan. It will be clear that afore-mentioned measures do not in any way discharge the shipowner from responsibility / liability in this matter.

The table below indicates where such measurements can be carried out. A certain alert value is applied here with respect to further investigation. Some of these measurements will be taken as the ship sails into port.

Risks and locations of radiation measurements

Professional group	Contact risk	Location for risk-reducing measurements to be made in Rotterdam*)
Pilots	Pilot ladder, railings, decks and outdoor stairways	Ship's parts/components referred to
Tugmen and boatmen	Heaving line & (eyes of) hawsers	Ship's parts/components referred to
Other ship's service providers	Touching ship's parts	Ship's parts/components with which this professional group comes into contact
Radiation experts / inspectors	Ship's parts which are touched during execution of radiation measurements	
Other supervisors	Ship's parts which are touched during execution of work	Gangplanks along the cargo holds
'Sjorders' (those who secure and release cargo)	All parts used to lash containers on deck which are touched; Horizontal parts of ship / surface of deck where dust gathers; Top of containers	Ship's and container parts/components referred to
General indication		Top part of bridge or the like

* measurements relate to a) general radiation measurement, if positive b) identification measurements; if it can be traced back to Fukushima and applicable: c) wipe test to determine whether or not outside of container is contaminated.

The measures apply to ships which left a Japanese port after 14 March 2011 and have called at less than 6 ports since that departure.

Impact on ship's handling

The execution of the measurements could lead to some delays for incoming ships with the measuring team on board, or before the start of discharging operations. These delays are expected to be limited, unless the alert value is exceeded at several measurement locations.

What can the shipowner himself do to minimise the delay?

Preventive spraying of the horizontal parts of the ship to be trodden, using a powerful water jet.

Carry out indicative radiation measurements on board, followed by intensive rinsing of ship's or container parts where increased radiation is found.

If the ship's agent reports the arrival of the ship as early as possible to the Harbour Master (EKH), this offers relevant parties the opportunity to make optimum preparations.

Any questions on the above can be sent to: r.gunst@portofrotterdam.com