

Safety Alert

SA 005

Fuel Oil Quick Closing Valves

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has recently published a Safety Alert concerning the [“Inspection of Fuel Oil Quick Closing Valves”](#). It has been issued as a result of Port State Control (PSC) officers finding that fuel oil tank quick closing valves have sometimes been blocked open intentionally, or are so poorly maintained that they may not operate as designed when released in an emergency.

Quick closing valves are fitted to settling and service tanks within the machinery spaces, boiler room and the emergency generator space so that in the event of an emergency such as a fire, they may be safely closed from a remote location to prevent the fuel in the tank from feeding the fire. They may also be used to isolate a tank from the fire. The valves may be operated remotely by pull wires, hydraulics or compressed air.

As illustrated in the referenced alert, vessels have been found with fuel oil quick closing valves blocked or tied open in order to stop them closing due to a fault with either the release system or the valve itself. Also valves which have ceased to function due to lack of maintenance, insufficient compressed air, inadequate hydraulic oil pressure or where the release wire or mechanism

has been disconnected intentionally.

In order to ensure that fuel oil quick closing valves are maintained and available for immediate use, all engineers should be:

- Aware of the location of the quick release valves and their remote release panels.
- Able to close the valves both locally and remotely and reset them ready for use.
- Familiar with the inspection, maintenance, repair and testing of the valves.

In addition, it is further recommended that:

- The quick closing valves and their release mechanisms are added to the vessel's critical equipment list within the Safety Management System.
- An inspection and maintenance regime is included in the vessel's planned maintenance system.
- Technical manuals, drawings and spare parts lists for the valves and system components are available on board.
- The valves, so far as is safe and practicable, are tested periodically to ensure they function as intended with valves, or groups of valves,

closing when activated remotely.

- Instructions and markings at remote release locations are easily understood and legible.
- Class is informed if a defect which cannot be easily rectified is found within the quick closing system which might affect the safety of the vessel.

The USCG has advised that ships' engineers may be questioned on the maintenance of the quick closing system during Port State Control (PSC) inspections and be asked to produce operational test and maintenance records. Engineers may also be required to describe how to test the valves, reset them, and demonstrate their understanding of the system. In the event of a vessel being found with inoperative quick closing valves, customary PSC sanctions may be imposed including the possibility of detention.

Club cover may not be available in the event of a claim arising or fines or penalties being imposed as a result of fuel oil tank quick closing valves being blocked open.

Members requiring further guidance should contact the Loss Prevention department.