

Portcare
International



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Press Clippings

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Box losses don't stack up. Part Two

April 20, 2021



A failure to enforce regulations has left the container shipping industry exposed to violations in weight restrictions of containers.

In [Part One of the container losses](#) story the emphasis was on the commercial pressures on the shipping lines and how those pressures were transmitted further down the line adding to the pressures on masters.

However, another aspect of the complex issue of container stack collapses is how regulation and commercial pressures interact to affect operational matters. That will include a scrutiny of cargo planning and the verified gross mass (VGM) regulations that are supposed to help masters and planners to make sure that container stacks do not exceed maximum weight levels, that is 192,000kg in aggregated weight for a stack.

The World Shipping Council (WSC) points out that there is a requirement for shippers to inform the carrier of the weight of a container, either by weighing the packed box or by adding the weight of the contents to the weight of the container to give a total mass.

According to the WSC, "There is, however, currently no requirement that all packed containers shall without exception be weighed. The WSC proposal at the time [when VGM was under discussion] was that all containers be weighed, but the current SOLAS VGM rules reflect a political compromise at the IMO when the issue of container weights was last considered in 2010-2014."

According to Richard Brough, the head of the International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association (ICHCA), the weighing of every container is the "gold standard" for the VGM rules, but many ports do not even have a weighbridge.

In the debate leading to the implementation of the VGM rules weighing all containers was discussed, but the International Maritime Organization stopped short of imposing that standard. However, it is unknown now how many containers are weighed, "many ports are geared up to weigh containers," said Brough, but usually these are the major terminal operators such as PSA and DP World.



Lost boxes can be a danger to other vessels in navigational channels as well as polluting the oceans.

The International Organisation of Legal Metrology, (OIML) which sets the standards for weight measuring systems, can certify cranes and other port technology to weigh containers. If this was imposed ports could weigh boxes, making checks against VGM declarations to see if there are any discrepancies, argued Brough.

However, he went on to point out that "ports have no obligation to weigh containers, the responsibility is with the shipper or the person named on the bill of lading."

As a result, commercial pressures were brought to bear with the weighing process slowing the movement of cargo, with the extra costs for ports around the globe meaning that few ports have weigh stations installed, meaning that it is impossible to know whether a container's content has been correctly identified and its weight accurately notified to the carrier.

Furthermore, ICHCA points out that as ports are not internationally regulated and that the VGM rules are therefore applied more or less rigorously depending on the local jurisdiction, that means in the UK a misdeclaration of a container weight can mean a US\$20,000 fine or two years in prison, whereas in the Netherlands it is a civil offence and can attract a US\$300 fine.

Few countries weigh containers, most recently Bangladesh enacted legislation to compel the weighing of containers, and Brough believes that what is needed, is for "national authorities to comply" with IMO rules. Currently, he believes the system is "woefully inadequate" and he believes that countries either "don't care or don't have the resources" to comply with the regulations.

What is more, Brough argues that ports, which are currently regulated by their national governments, need to comply with some form of international regulation, precisely because they are a critical element of the supply chain. This, in part, is due to the complex mix of ports around the globe, explains the ICHCA head.

"It's a wholly unsatisfactory lack of enforcement, while the CTU Code [Cargo Transport Unit] is not mandatory legislation," Brough pointed out.

These failures in the regulatory system mean that accidents, such as the truck leaving Felixstowe Port which saw a cargo of badly packed photocopy paper, move, turning the truck over and killing the drivers.

Even so, Brough explains that to his knowledge there have been no prosecutions for poorly packed or overweight containers since the VGM code entered into force in 2016.

It is not only trucks that can suffer from overweight or poorly packed containers as ships also need to stack containers with the weight of the boxes critical to their position on the vessel. These containers can make stacks unstable and also affect the stability of the vessel too.

Cargo planners and vessel masters plan to stow cargo so as to distribute the weight evenly. That includes the centre of gravity of the ship, known as the GM. Captain Gaurav Sharma argues that charterers may apply pressure to change the reported GM of the ship. The GM is a calculation that pinpoints the static stability of a vessel, known as the metacentric height or GM for short.

If the GM is too low, the vessel will find it difficult to return to the upright attitude, too high a GM and the accelerations in the rolling motion can cause massive stresses on the lashing gear.

Sharma believes that some charterers have applied pressure onto load planners to shift the GM to allow them to increase the cargo loads, crucially adding to the forces encountered by the lashing gear, including the twistlocks. This might occur because the vessel encounters heavy weather and with unknow container weights aboard the vessel the rolling motions, and therefore the forces on all the lashing gear, could increase substantially.

"With one reputable company and charterer they very often had lashing violations, many told the vessel operator, but they just said it's acceptable," alleged Sharma, "Sometimes owners will not stand up to charterers and say they won't stand for lashing forces being exceeded."

He claimed that charterers are aware of the relationships between owners and masters and apply pressure on owners who pass that on to the masters, persuading them to accede to charterers' demands, this can lead to "lifting forces being exceeded," or overloading, or the loading of heavy containers inappropriately "to avoid shifting them in other ports," costing time for the vessel.

"Every rule and regulation gives the master the opportunity to reject unacceptable loading patterns, but masters are often forced to meet these demands through the commercial pressures felt by the owners." That pressure is passed on to the master who understands that their job can be at risk if they do not comply, alleged Sharma. Smaller owners are more susceptible to these pressures, according to the captain.

Both Capt Ben Jones (not his real name) and Capt Gaurav Sharma agree that these work pressures are most common between regional ports such as within Europe or a region in Asia, but also that these events can occur, less commonly, on deepsea operations also.

In the final part of this mini-series of stories on stack collapses the discussion will analyse the technical failures that could add to the regulatory and commercial issues causing stack collapses.

1 April 2021

ICHCA lead changes hands

April 1, 2021

ICHCA International appoints Richard Steele as its new head.

The International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association (ICHCA) has appointed Richard Steele as the new head of ICHCA International. Steele will take over the role from 1 July 2021, on the retirement of the current postholder Richard Brough O.B.E.



Richard Steele, who has also worked in the nuclear industry on safety and skills provision, will be the new head of ICHCA International.

Reporting directly to ICHCA's board, Richard Steele will lead the organisation, which provides a focal point to help improve cargo handling throughout international supply chains as well as representing its members, and the cargo handling industry, in front of national and international agencies and regulatory bodies as a recognised non-government organisation.

ICHCA said Steele is a safety and skills professional with a master's in training and development who has been involved in the port industry for over 21 years. He is currently the chief executive at Port Skills and Safety (PSS), an organisation that he has led for 11 years. Before PSS, Steele was the senior learning and development manager for Associated British Ports for 10 years.

The International Cargo Handling Coordination Association (ICHCA) has appointed Richard Steele as its new head of ICHCA International, taking over from Richard Brough from 1 July. He is a safety and skills professional and has been involved in the ports industry for over 21 years. He is currently the Chief Executive at Port Skills and Safety an organisation that he has led for 11 years and was previously senior learning and development manager for Associated British Ports for ten years.

9 April 2021

Friday, April 9, 2021

Update on Freight and Logistics Appointments and Departures

Who is Heading Where Along the Supply Chain

UK – The International Cargo Handling Coordination Association ([ICHCA](#)) has announced the appointment of Richard Steele as the new Head of ICHCA International. He will take over the role with effect from July 1, on the retirement of the current postholder Richard Brough O.B.E. Reporting directly to the Board, Steele will lead the organisation. He is currently the Chief Executive at Port Skills and Safety an organisation that he has led for 11 years.

12 April 2021

Richard Steele to be ICHCA's new head in July

THE International Cargo Handling Coordination Association (ICHCA) has appointed Richard Steele as its new head, taking over the role from July 1 on the retirement of the current postholder Richard Brough.

Reporting directly to the board, Mr Steele will lead the organisation, which provides a focal point to help improve cargo handling throughout international supply chains as well as representing its members, and the cargo handling industry, in front of national and international agencies and regulatory bodies as a recognised non-government organisation.

Mr Steele is a safety and skills professional with a masters in training and development who has been involved in the ports industry for over 21 years. He is currently the chief executive at Port Skills and Safety (PSS) an organisation that he has led for 11 years. Before PSS, he was the senior learning and development manager for Associated British Ports for 10 years. Prior to ports, he worked in the nuclear industry on safety and skills provision.

Sri Lanka transshipments down 3.3pc, local volume off 14.4pc

SRI LANKA's ports container throughput fell 5.2 per cent to 6.85 million TEU in 2020, while total domestic volumes fell 14.4 per cent to 1.08 million TEU from 1.2 million TEU in 2019, and transshipments fell 3.3 per cent to 5.6 million TEU from 5.8 million TEU in 2019, reports Colombo's Echelon Media.

Domestic container volumes were down 7.3 per cent to 104,474 TEU in December.

Bulk cargo discharged at the ports was down four per cent to 59.46 million tonnes December volumes were up two per cent to US\$5.25 million.

Declines are a result of the Covid crisis, a year that greatly affected the shipping industry across the globe.

 **TOP**

20 April 2021

Richard Steele Tapped to Lead ICHCA International

[Stay on top of transportation news: [Get TTNews in your inbox.](#)]

The International Cargo Handling Coordination Association announced last month that Richard Steele has been appointed to serve as the new head of ICHCA International.

Founded in 1952, ICHCA is a nonprofit group focused on the safety, sustainability and efficiency of cargo handling and goods movement across the international supply chain.

Steele, who has been involved in the ports industry for about 21 years, will assume the role July 1.



Steele

Steele currently works as chief executive at Port Skills and Safety, an organization that shares best practices and develops safety guidance for the industry.

READ MORE: [Additional People News](#)

“Richard’s skills and experience will ensure that we move confidently forward,” said ICHCA International Chairman John Beckett. “He has proven leadership and organizational management ability which will be invaluable to our future. The ICHCA board is very excited about the journey ahead as we continue to build on the exceptional work of our outgoing head, Richard Brough.”