



Crucial amendment to IMDG Code on Ammonium Nitrate sanctioned by the IMO

The global cargo handling association ICHCA International (ICHCA) welcomes the recent IMO decision to amend a key aspect of the IMDG Code governing ammonium nitrate shipments to significantly improve their safe transportation by sea and highlights its importance as part of the association's Dangerous Goods Awareness campaign.

London, 1st May 2025

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has approved changes to its maritime safety regulations in the form of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code to improve the safety of ammonium nitrate transport by sea. ICHCA is drawing attention to the move, as well as other changes to the IMDG Code designed to improve safety when shipping handling and carrying dangerous goods via its awareness campaign throughout 2025.

This particular change affects Clause 7.6.2.8.4 and reinforces that carriage of UN 1942 Ammonium Nitrate and UN 2067 Ammonium Nitrate Based Fertilizer under deck is only permitted if hatches including tween deck hatches are capable of being opened up in an emergency so that effective firefighting through maximum ventilation and boundary cooling can be undertaken.

The amendment follows an ICHCA prepared White Paper* on the subject lodged with IMO in 2022, which recommended clarification of the relevant IMDG Clause. "Although not mandatory until 1st January 2026 it can be applied on a voluntary basis from January 2025. ICHCA is urging all those involved in the maritime transport of ammonium nitrate to abide by the new regulation immediately," says CEO Richard Steele. "The work by our Technical Panel over several months made the case for amending the IMDG Code very clear, backed by thorough understanding of the properties of these compounds and by detailed guidance on how such risks could be mitigated."

The risks posed by poor conditions of storage of ammonium nitrate, which is used extensively in the fertilisers and explosives industries, had been well documented but awareness of the dangers of fire during transportation by sea was less well

recognised until the ICHCA White Paper showed the risks on vessels chartered to ship these compounds through ports around the world.

Ammonium Nitrate (NH_4NO_3), a white to grey odourless chemical has a melting point of 169 degrees C and decomposes at 210 degrees C. While it does not burn by itself, it will significantly accelerate burning of combustible material. “These properties in particular demand careful consideration of how and where ammonium nitrate is stowed on board vessels,” says the paper’s lead author Brian Devaraj, who is a member of ICHCA’s Technical Panel. “Ammonium nitrate fires can escalate out of control very rapidly. To help prevent consequential loss of life and damage, the new provisions laid out in the IMDG Code, in particular clause 7.6.2.8.4 should be complied with at all times.”

“This seemingly unremarkable clause is in fact crucial to safe shipping of ammonium nitrate,” explains Devaraj. “7.6.2.8.4 states that certain product with specified UN Numbers may be stowed under deck in a clean cargo space capable of being opened in an emergency, including need to open hatches in case of fire to provide maximum ventilation and to apply water. This of course precludes a hold containing ammonium nitrate to be over-stowed with another cargo.”

The intention of the amendment is to avoid any misunderstanding on this point, clarifying that all vessel hatches - including tween decks and any other compartments- should be openable in case of an ammonium nitrate fire. “Of particular concern is where this product is carried in multi-layered compartments of conventional reefer vessels, wherein compliance to this clause is next to impossible. Several jurisdictions, that handle the product in significant quantities, have already taken heed of this risk. Countries including Australia, South Africa and Chile have specific regulatory requirements. This newly worded clause in the IMDG will eliminate any ambiguity on its application to all types of ships including bulk, multipurpose tween deckers, conventional reefer vessels etc.” Devaraj concluded.

“The guidance of these authorities as well as the in-depth explanation of the significance of Clause 7.6.2.8.4 wording is contained within our White Paper and we at ICHCA are enthusiastically promoting the amendment and its immediate application by all involved in the ammonium nitrate trade,” concludes Steele.



*The whitepaper, '*Ammonium Nitrate Fire Risk on Board Ships*' is available for free download [Here](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About ICHCA International

Established in 1952, ICHCA International is an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the safety, productivity and efficiency of cargo handling and movement worldwide. ICHCA's privileged NGO status enables it to represent its members, and the cargo handling industry at large, in front of national and international agencies and regulatory bodies, while its Technical Panel provides best practice advice and develops publications on a wide range of practical cargo handling issues.

Operating through a series of national and regional chapters, including ICHCA Australia, ICHCA Japan and plus Correspondence and Working Groups, ICHCA provides a focal point for informing, educating, lobbying and networking to improve knowledge and best practice across the cargo handling chain.

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