

GLOBALPANDI

Circular for P & I Clubs

DATE: 10th MAY 2010

Correspondents for:

Britannia, British Marine, Charterers P&I Club, GARD, ITIC, Navigators, Nordisk Defence Club (Through Sabatino Pizzolante), North of England P&I Club, Raets Club, Shipowners P&I Club, Skuld, South of England, Steamship Mutual, The American Club, The London P&I Club, West of England and Through Transport Club (TTC).

Prohibition of cleaning/painting of hulls at Lake Maracaibo

On 5th April 2010 the Harbour Master of the Port of Maracaibo, Captain Miguel A. Figueroa Adrian, issued an instruction to ship owners, managers, masters, ship agencies, navigating pilots, manoeuvring pilots and other users of the channel, prohibiting the cleaning of hull within the Lake Maracaibo, in compliance of provisions of the Law on Waters. Circular No. AJZL 003/2010 states, among other things, that considering that the Lake Maracaibo in one of the main hydrographical river basin of the country; that the Lake Maracaibo is a body of superficial waters subject to degradation by action and effect of introducing materials or substances that lead to induce conditions in this body of waters which directly or indirectly may result in damage to ecological balance and consequently develop in contamination of these waters; that at the Lake Maracaibo vessels' hulls are presently cleaned, hulls that are impregnated with hydrocarbons residues picked up while operating at Oil Terminals and which are removed by chemical substances or some sub products of petroleum, that this activity implies spillage of substances into the waters which real effect its quality has not yet been analyzed by the competent organisms; and, that the removal of hydrocarbons residues from the hull of vessels as well as those of paint and upper works in port areas represents a technical activity known within what is called Integral Handling of the Waters on which the aquatic authority has not available the technical procedures, the methodology nor adequate normative, then it is necessary to establish and maintain appropriate guideline handbooks in respect of preservation and pollution of the waters.

Consequently, the Harbour Master decided to address to all the parties concerned, the following instructions with effect on 12th April 2010 onwards:

1. Cleaning and removal of hydrocarbons residues attached to the hull of vessels is not permitted while vessels are in operation or remain anchored in the waters of the Lake Maracaibo.
2. Scraping and painting of hulls of vessels operating in port areas is not permitted while vessels are in operation or remain anchored in the waters of the Lake Maracaibo except in those cases where repainting of draft or the name of the vessel is performed and this, with previous authorization of the aquatic authority.
3. The shipping agencies or the representatives of the vessel shall be responsible to divulge the contents of the said instructions.
4. Non compliance of the above provisions shall be cause for imposition of the corresponding administrative sanctions.

The Circular No. AJZL 003/2010 has caused some concerns among those navigating within Lake Maracaibo and calling at its different terminals (La Salina, Bajo Grande and Puerto Miranda) due to reported oil slicks found on the surface of the lake, staining the hull of ships which subsequently need to be cleaned up prior to departure. Although it has been learned of meetings between PDVSA and the maritime authority (INEA) to discuss the matter, it is not clear yet the available options to ships facing this specific problem. The order is said to be aimed, however, to prevent that cleaning/painting takes place in the inner part of the lake, diverting such activities to be performed closed to the terminals´ anchorage areas. As far as we know PDVSA has continued to undertake the cleaning up of hulls following the issuance of the instruction under comment. Members are suggested, therefore, to properly document/inspect the hull´s stains and to report the matter immediately to the terminal for subsequent action.

Should you need any assistance or further information regarding the topic stated above, please feel free to contact:

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