

# SIRE inspection requirements and STS operations

**DYNAMARINe has prepared a guide for senior officers on board vessels analysing the VIQ-7 questionnaire, in order to prepare for a SIRE inspection and vetting assessment.**

**T**his guide specifically looks at ship-to-ship (STS) elements of VIQ-7 with references to industry best practice.

The guide's content includes the relevant VIQ question along with critical comments and remarks, on the basis of the knowledge that the DYNAMARINe team has accumulated by assessing STS element reports, prepared for each STS operation of the company's client's vessels.

In preparing the guide, the company acknowledged the support received by shore operators and Masters.

Section A contains the introduction, while Section B addresses related VIQ topics, comments and best practices.

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It has been published in a question and answer format with points of concern raised and then answered.

The first question in Section B is - Are the officers and crew familiar with the requirements and risks during STS operations?

**Points of concern here are -**

- 1) Does the ship have an approved STS plan in line with the latest OCIMF ICS/OCIMF/SIGTTO/CDI 'Ship to Ship Transfer Guide, for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases' -first edition 2013?
- 2) Does the risk assessment available on board include STS hazards not less than those outlined in Appendix K of the latest OCIMF guidelines?
- 3) Is a risk assessment of the location undertaken? This is different from the STS risk assessment already on board.
- 4) Is the Master or Chief Officer (a management level senior officer) qualified

to become a POAC?

- 5) Does the STS plan include provisions for the maintenance of fenders, hoses or other STS related equipment?

The guide answers these questions by providing a list of best practices and provisions of DYNAMARINe's STS registered vessels to each of the points above.

**Points of concern during a SIRE inspection are covered by the same question and answer format. The questions are -**

- 1) In previous STS operations, had the nominated POAC satisfied the requirements of IMO oil pollution manual section 1 - Prevention, Para 6.2.1.2 and the company's STS policies?
- 2) Are a POAC's qualifications assessed as a routine practice within the SMS system?
- 3) Are the POAC's qualification records kept?
- 4) Should senior officers know how the POAC's qualifications are assessed?
- 5) What is the Master's and C/O's understanding of the words 'experience', 'similar circumstances' and 'similar vessels' when referring to points 3 and 4 above.
- 6) If the cargo transferred by an STS operation relates to gas or chemical products, does the POAC have to comply with the above qualifications?
- 7) What is the difference in a POAC qualification when an STS operation is undertaken within port limits?

**Addressing the provision of closed fairleads**

**and mooring bitts, the questions posed are -**

- 1) Are the use of open chocks accepted?
- 2) If an open fairlead has a stopping bar, is this accepted as best practice?
- 3) Is a proper mooring plan requested from the service provider prior to the commencement of STS operations?
- 4) Are the closed chocks inspected that will be used according to the mooring plan provided for scratches before the STS operation starts?
- 5) Is confirmation from the POAC requested regarding the chocks of the participating vessel being properly maintained.
- 6) Are the use of wire tails, instead of synthetics accepted?

On the basis of feedback from Masters, who are members of onlineSTS.net service, in December, 2017, DYNAMARINe published criteria for the information required to develop a mooring plan, which were adopted by certain STS service providers.

The criteria are listed in the guide.

**Turning to checklists and records, the guide posed the questions -**

- 1) Are STS records kept on board a vessel for three years?
- 2) Are all of the required documents requested from the service provider prior to start of an STS operation?
- 3) Is the crew's STS experience recorded after an STS operation has been completed?

Another section contains a what if scenario of an STS transfer operation being carried out while a SIRE inspection is underway. Here the questions posed were -

- 1) Are the hoses inspected for scratches before the STS operation starts?
- 2) Are protective sleeves used in case more than one line passes through a single chock?
- 3) Are the mooring lines inspected before an STS operation?
- 4) Are the mooring lines' forces calculated?
- 5) Is the risk assessment in line with OCIMF Annex K?
- 6) Is the person confident in assessing safety, crew preparedness and the safety of the STS operation?

Finally, an ExxonMobil STS transfer supplement on environmental, safety and quality criteria has been included in the guide.

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## STS requirements and risks - the basics

Basically, any oil tanker of over 150 gt involved in an STS operation must carry a plan on board - the STS Operations Plan - which must be approved by the flag administration.

The plan should be developed against the information contained in IMO's 'Manual on Oil Pollution, Section 1, Prevention and the ICS/OCIMF/SIGTTO/CDI' Ship to Ship Transfer Guide, for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases' - First Edition 2013.

Vessel exceptions are transfer operations from FPSOs, FSOs and bunker tankers.

This working plan should be written in the working language practised on board the ship.

A risk assessment should be undertaken when considering the suitability of a location for a transfer, plus for the STS operation itself.

All STS transfer operations should be undertaken under the co-ordination and advisory control of one individual, who will be either one of the Masters involved, an STS superintendent of the POAC.

To prevent fatigue during a long transfer operation, the role maybe transferred to another suitably qualified person.

If a vessel is fitted with permanent fenders and hoses, there shall be a procedures in place to monitor and assess the condition the equipment in accordance with the manufacturers' guidelines.

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Tlf. +47 755 42 440

E-post: [restech@restech.no](mailto:restech@restech.no)

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