

What steps should a prudent shipowner take when placing vessels in layup?

When taking the decision to layup a vessel, there are several considerations that must be made. This article details those considerations, and the proceeding actions Members should take, when placing vessels in lay up.

Duration of layup

The first consideration is the duration of the intended layup period. This will help the Member in the decision to either place the vessel in hot or cold layup.

A hot layup means that machinery is kept in a state of operation and can be re-commissioned in a short time scale if there is a change in the employment of the vessel. It is typical if the vessel is to be idle for a period of 12 months or less for it to be maintained in a hot layup state.

Where a vessel is planned to be laid up for more than 12 months, cold layup is a viable option. This means that the machinery is taken out of service and the vessel made electrically 'dead'. It is often the case that the emergency power supply is turned off. In these instances shore power or deck generators can be used to supply power to the vessel to ensure that the necessary equipment, which may include navigational lights and appropriate deck lighting, are operational during hours of darkness.

A comment from CTRL

In most circumstances owners will need to enter into a contract with the Yard or owner of the facility where the Vessel is to be laid up. The contract will need to state who will be responsible if, for example, any damage occurs to the vessel or the facilities while the vessel is laid up. CTRL can review these contracts for you and advise on your potential liabilities or recourse if anything goes wrong.

Location

The next consideration is the layup location. The location should be sheltered and not exposed to strong winds, high currents, tidal streams or swell. Historical meteorological information

available from weather services providers assists in evaluation. In a case of laying up at berth, it is important that the layup berth is safe, given the size of the vessel, and can adequately accommodate the vessel for the entire period of layup. In case of anchoring, apart from ample sea room being available, the seabed should have good holding characteristics and be free from obstructions or other hazards, along with adequate water depth for the vessel, so it can remain afloat at all states of the tide, with sufficient under keel clearance.

Mooring arrangements

The layup procedure, including mooring/anchoring configurations, should be planned and evaluated. This includes but is not limited to the method of mooring the vessel: Is the vessel to be alongside or at anchor? On mooring buoys or moored alongside other vessels? When assessing mooring requirements it is important to ensure that the moorings are suitable to withstand the worst weather which can be expected at the layup location. If the vessel is to be laid up alongside, it is important that the bollards to which the vessel is intended to be moored are of adequate strength and suitably positioned to allow for a good lead from the vessel.

Layup Maintenance Programme

Once the period and type of layup period has been decided, there will be a number of other considerations for the vessel in order to ensure the safety and security of the vessel during the laid up period. These should be assessed and set out in the layup maintenance programme. The vessel's classification society should be contacted prior to the creation of this programme, as they will be able to advise on their requirements for the layup, and the layup maintenance programme should be submitted to them for approval after its creation. Some aspects to be considered are:

Inspection and Maintenance

- At what frequency will visual inspections or tests be carried out to ensure the continued acceptable structural condition of the vessel in order to detail any maintenance required?
- How often must scheduled maintenance be carried out on the machinery in order to prevent failures at the time of reactivation?
- Will the maintenance be carried out by the crew or a shore based team?
- If necessary, which areas of the vessel will receive specific ongoing maintenance?

Safety

- How will fire prevention, detection and fire fighting be carried out on the vessel?
- Where applicable, will life saving appliances be sufficient for the crew remaining on board or for any third party workers visiting the vessel?
- Have emergency response plans been prepared and are they tailored to the vessel's particular layup conditions?
- Has the watertight and weathertight integrity of the vessel been confirmed? Such as

closure of doors, hatch covers and manhole covers, to prevent any ingress of water.

Security

- How will access to the vessel be restricted and monitored?
- What security procedures are in place at the port and how will the vessel comply with them?
- Is there an emergency response plan in place in case of a security breach?

Manning

- Will the crew meet statutory manning requirements (refer to section on Statutory Requirements)?
- Will the crew of the vessel be sufficient in number and experience in order to carry out the programme effectively?

Weather

- How will weather reports be monitored regularly (by the on board crew or by the shore office in the case of an unmanned vessel) in order to gain early warning of any developing storms in the area? This allows Members to take additional steps to ensure safety of the vessel as appropriate.

Collision Regulations

- As applicable, navigational lights and shapes must be displayed in accordance with the collision regulations / port requirements to ensure that other vessels in the vicinity have no doubt with regards to the status of the vessel.

Lay Up Surveys

The Classification Society or Certifying Authority (as applicable) will oversee that equipment and machinery is deactivated in accordance with their standards and additionally will inspect the condition of the vessel, ensuring that procedures are in place to execute the maintenance plan, and note any areas that may need more targeted maintenance and detailed inspection on reactivation, such as:

- areas of visible corrosion which should be monitored throughout;
- navigational equipment which may need repairing before the vessel is operational;
- machinery which may need regular turning in order to prevent seizure.

If the vessel is laid up for over twelve months, a class inspection will be carried out on an annual basis to verify that the plan is being effectively implemented in order for the vessel to maintain Class. While in layup, a layup logbook should be maintained on board which should be used to record the work carried out in terms of maintenance and repairs, in order to help the surveyor

ensure that procedures are being followed when conducting the annual survey.

The Club has noted that some Members choose to allow Class to lapse during the period of lay up or instead suspend Class, intentionally leaving the vessel un-classed during the laid up period. This is sometimes due to the false belief that these options are cheaper than maintaining Class with a laid up status during this period.

When the vessel is placed into layup by Class, all overdue surveys are frozen as long as the annual layup surveys are carried out. This means that, while the certificates may expire, they can be renewed with a standard renewal survey, and this will likely form part of the reactivation survey.

However, if a vessel is not subject to a layup survey and a Class survey is overdue, the vessel operator will normally have one month to contact Class to explain the situation. After this month has elapsed, Class could be withdrawn. In order for the vessel to be re-classed, the vessel must undergo every initial survey again, a process which will normally be more expensive than maintaining a laid up Class status with an annual survey.

Statutory and operational requirements

Members must ensure that the statutory certificates of the vessel remain valid throughout the period of layup as failure to do so could prejudice cover.

The vessel's Flag Administration will require notification of the vessel's change in status, with each Administration having its own individual requirements. These should be checked prior to the vessel being laid up. This may include variations in layup procedures, emergency response plans, navigational watch arrangements, security arrangements and manning levels.

The vessel must remain adequately manned as per the Flag Administration's requirements at all times throughout the layup, although with approval from the Administration, the vessel may be able to reduce manning numbers in order to make operational cost savings. However, it cannot be stressed more that this is strictly to be in accordance with the Flag Administration's approval of the revised manning levels.