

Captain Hari Subramaniam: What steps should a prudent shipowner take when bringing their vessels back into service after a long period of layup?



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Layup reactivation is crucial given that the vessel may have been out of service for a number of months and hence the Club has a survey requirement when it comes to layup reactivations (Rule 35).

The extent of re-commissioning work would depend on whether the vessel was under hot or cold layup, the length of time the vessel was laid up and the extent of maintenance carried out during the laid up period. There are many steps to be considered when preparing to re-commission the vessel after a layup. The following is a non-exhaustive guide for layup reactivations.

The Class/Flag/Company procedures must be consulted prior to commencement of trading. In the event of a prolonged layup, due consideration must be given for the vessel to undergo sea trials, as appropriate, for a proper assessment of the vessel and its equipment.

Manning

Even where the vessel was on reduced manning for the period of the layup, with the permission of the Flag administration, it is imperative that prior to reactivation the vessel is adequately manned by competent and experienced crew. This may not apply to vessels which are certified manned.

Survey and certification

In the event that the laid up status was endorsed by Flag and/or Class when the vessel went into lay-up, the intention of reactivation must be conveyed to them in advance. Any inspections required by Flag and/or Class for putting the vessel back into active service must be undertaken. It would be prudent to notify the local port authorities in case of any specific port requirements. A review of the vessel's safety management system should be considered if the vessel has been laid up for a long period. The Club's reactivation survey may also be required as per the Rules.

Structural condition

This aspect may have been neglected during the period of layup and hence an assessment of the vessel's hull and other structural components will have to be undertaken to ensure that the vessel is structurally sound to recommence trading. This should include examination of the vessel's hull and the sea chests to ensure they are free from excessive marine fouling.

Deck machinery

All deck equipment, including anchoring, mooring and lifting (cranes, derricks, etc.) equipment must be tested for proper operation. The anchors must be checked to ensure that they aren't fouled during the layup period or it may delay heaving up anchor.

Engine room machinery

All machinery, including the main engines, must be tested for satisfactory operation. Lube oil analysis should be carried out as required. Emergency alarms and shut down systems should also be tested.

Cargoworthiness

The cleanliness of the cargo spaces must be checked including the condition of coatings, as applicable. All pumping systems, cargo tank high level alarms and cargo hold bilge high level alarms must be checked for operation. In the case of barges, if sideboards are fitted, these must be checked for condition. Weather-tightness of cargo hatch covers must be checked and made good as required.

Life saving appliances (LSA)/Fire Fighting Equipment (FFA)

It should be verified that all fixed and portable LSA/FFA service checks are up to date and that they are in a good serviceable condition prior to reactivation.

Navigation and communication equipment

All navigation equipment is to be tested as per the manufacturer's instructions and serviced as required. Electronic systems are prone to deterioration when unused for prolonged periods.

Hence, care must be taken to have them running for a sufficient time prior to being put into actual use.

Cover will be subject to the vessel undergoing a condition survey, under Rule 35, if laid up for a period of six months or more, whether the vessel has been entered in the Association for all or part of the period of lay-up. The inspection is to be carried out by a surveyor appointed by the Association. All associated costs are to be borne by the Member in full.

The onus is on the Member to ensure that they give the Association notice that the vessel is to be reactivated not less than seven days before the vessel departs the place of lay-up. If any follow up surveys are required the cost of these are to be borne by the Member in full.