

▶ HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH DIRTY ENGINE ROOM BILGES

The Club would like to highlight to Member's the potential fire hazards associated with oily engine room bilges and the checks and steps that a ship's crew should undertake to address this issue. A recent analysis of the Club's [Condition Survey Programme](#) highlighted that approximately 25% of the vessels surveyed reported contaminated engine room bilges.

Whilst an oily bilge may not be the immediate source of a fire, any fire that arises in an engine room or machinery space has the potential to escalate and spread rapidly. The presence of oil accumulated in bilges or drip trays act as additional fuel to sustain burning and increase the likelihood of the fire reaching further areas.

The Club recommends that bilges, especially in the engine room, should be kept clean and free of oil at all times and chemical cleaning should be completed periodically. Members are also advised to paint engine room bilges a light colour to assist in visually identifying a fresh leak.

It is imperative that the source of any oily water in the bilge is fully investigated as oil and water leaking from machinery, pipes and valves within an engine room will seep into the bilges. However, a bilge filling up with oil or water could also be a tell-tale sign of a greater problem, such as a leaking propeller shaft, stern seal or cracks in the hull or tank bulkheads.

Port State Control officers are increasingly classifying oily bilges as a detainable deficiency, consequently, one of the Club's vessels that failed to safeguard was recently detained.

We recommend Members to refer to the [Safety Management Systems](#) bulletin for guidance on ship-specific procedural systems, also to allow for periodic checks on the engine room bilges and ensure that written procedures regarding oily bilge transfer and discharge operations are established.

Additionally, we would like to draw Member's attention to an earlier bulletin issued by the Club regarding [Fire prevention on board ships](#).

We trust Members find these recommendations useful and if further assistance is required please contact the [Loss Prevention Team](#).