

ABS CHEM - supporting chemtanker class approvals

The highly competitive chemical tanker market must balance the need for high safety standards and commercial imperatives, especially when it comes to securing cargoes, writes Stein Nilsen, Technical Advisor, ABS.

New product releases, name changes of existing chemicals and agreements between countries, mean that owners must regularly work with class to obtain an addendum to their Certificate of Fitness (CoF) in order to carry the named cargo.

Because different cargoes have different safety requirements for items such as monitoring or temperature systems, not all chemicals can be carried by all ships. Running the vessel configuration against cargo safety requirements has until now required manual checking and verification by the owner, followed by submission of a request for verification by class.

The speed of response is critical because even while a vessel is approaching port to discharge, the chartering department will be looking for a return cargo. If a customer has stems available, the team will want to start negotiating rates as soon as possible.

Any delay in discovering that the ship is not suitable to carry a specific cargo could mean that the business is lost; by the time a substitute is found, the opportunity may have gone. With

other operators ready to bid, time is of the essence and the faster the owner can confirm the vessel the better.

It's a problem identified by ABS, which in response released ABS CHEM, claimed to be a unique client-focussed version of the software used by its engineering department to determine if vessel characteristics match cargo criteria.

Owners will often have a general idea of the vessel's configuration but rather than be forced to check pages of documentation to see if ship and cargo are compatible, ABS CHEM allows them to enter full vessel details only once. When a new cargo is identified they can quickly check to obtain a preliminary decision on whether carriage is permitted.

The owner must still seek final approval from the ABS engineering department but by using ABS CHEM for a preliminary approval means the operations team can continue scheduling and even loading operations, knowing that they will likely obtain the addendum.

Where they discover that the vessel is incompatible with the cargo, they can save the cost of the class society verification.

Having dramatically reduced the time needed for owners to gain initial approval for their vessels, ABS is working to reduce the feedback cycle still further. Plans are being developed to enable the export of existing ship characteristics held by ABS into the 'owner version' of ABS CHEM, shortening the process and allowing both parties to access the same data set.

A service only available from ABS, CHEM fulfils the class society's mission by supporting the safe carriage of chemical cargoes, since the

CoF addendum is only granted if the vessel is deemed to have the correct configuration to make the voyage in accordance with class rules.

In a market like chemical tankers, it means that chartering and operations staff can plan and prepare in confidence - even before the laden vessel has discharged - knowing the vessel can meet charterer requirements - something that could make the difference between fixing and missing the next cargo.

Marine fuel advice

In another move, ABS recently issued the 'Advisory on Marine Fuel Oil' to help industry prepare for IMO's 2020 global sulfur cap.

This advisory provides owners and operators with guidance on the considerations and challenges with marine fuels, which are likely to be used in addressing the 2020 global sulfur cap requirements.

"The IMO 2020 sulfur cap requirement will introduce a significant demand change from heavy fuel to low sulfur fuel almost overnight. The industry currently is debating how to prepare as the consequences of this shift are difficult to predict," said Dr Kirsi Tikka, ABS Executive Vice President and Senior Maritime Advisor. "The ABS Advisory addresses concerns about the safety impacts and quality of the new blended and hybrid fuels that are currently not covered by the ISO fuel standard, and provides guidance on fuel selection, modification considerations and operational challenges."

In a recent informal poll of shipowners and operators conducted by ABS, 53% said their fleets were not yet ready to meet upcoming sulfur cap requirements. As the deadline for compliance approaches, it is vital that industry consider the available options and the impacts on their fleets.

The ABS Advisory provides in-depth technical guidance covering a range of topics, from fuel properties to operational risks to potential preparations.

The screenshot displays the ABS CHEM software interface. At the top, it shows the ABS EAGLE logo and fields for Project Name, Vessel Name, and Sample Vessel. Below this, there are tabs for Vessel Information and Tank Arrangement. The Tank Configuration section includes dropdown menus for Tanks across beam (2), Wing ballast tanks (>= 760mm but < B/5...), Wing tanks per row (7), Centre tanks per row (5), and Inboard tanks per row (6). Below the configuration is a diagram of a vessel's tank layout, showing two rows of tanks labeled SLGP P and SLGP S, with individual tank positions numbered 1P through 6P and 1S through 6S. At the bottom, there is a 'Tank Groups' table:

Group Name	No. Tanks
N/A	0
Group 1	12
Group 2	2