

Lloyd's List

Radiation fears force ships to steer clear of Fukushima

- Monday 21 March 2011, 17:58
- by David Osler and Julian Macqueen

Interested in this topic? Set up a custom email alert and we'll tell you everytime we write more like this.

Fukushima exclusion zone: Guidance issued to shipping.

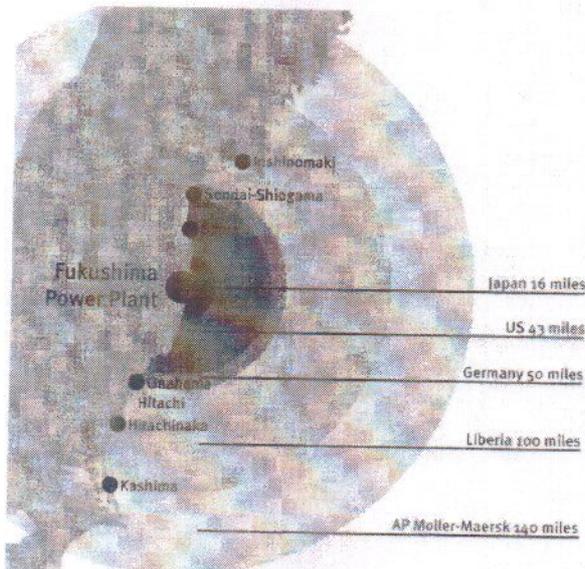
Governments quick to respond to nuclear concern but Lloyd's List data reveals minimal impact to trade

AT LEAST five countries have now told ships to avoid the waters around Japan's Fukushima nuclear power station, where the authorities are continuing their struggle to contain a serious radiation leak in the wake of the recent natural disasters.

The scope of the recommended exclusion zone varies between governments, however some operators have confirmed that their policy is to keep up to 140 miles away from the stricken plant, a distance far in excess of advice being offered shoreside.

While the ports in the affected region generally contribute very little in terms of trade activity, flags are advising ships to divert.

Lloyd's List Intelligence data reveals that ports in the affected region recorded 221 ship calls, amounting to just over 5% of total calls to Japan on a typical week prior to the tsunami.



FUKUSHIMA EXCLUSION ZONE Guidance issued to shipping

Port activity for week March 4 to March 10, 2011

Port	Calls	dwt
Kashima	67	1.6m
Hitachinaka	11	300,000
Hitachi	18	100,000
Onahama	38	300,000
Soma	2	100,000
Sendai-Shiogama	73	400,000
Ishinomaki	8	90,000
Hachinohe	3	50,000
TOTAL	221	2.9m

Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence

Nevertheless major open register Liberia is calling on vessels to remain at least 100 miles from the east coast of Honshu. A circular to that effect supersedes a recommendation issued earlier last week, which specified an exclusion distance of 300 miles.

"There is continuing concern for debris from the earthquake and tsunami, which may have an impact on ships transiting the area," the documents said.

The US Maritime Administration on Friday issued a notice to US ships advising that they stay "a minimum distance" of 43 miles away from the island. If a ship does enter the area, the time spent there should be recorded and the relevant US authorities informed prior to its arrival in a US port.

Danish shipowner association Danmarks Rederiforening confirmed today that the Danish government has also produced guidelines on the Fukushima crisis.

Executive vice-president Jans Fritz Hansen said: "We always follow those kind of guidelines from our government. We sent it out to our members and told them that this was the stipulation and that they should take note. I expect everybody will do so."

World number one vessel operator AP Moller-Maersk, a Danish company, is voluntarily observing an 140 mile exclusion zone, although it is continuing to call elsewhere in Japan.

"As long as it is considered safe, Maersk vessels will continue to call Japan," said Maersk spokesman Michael Storgaard. "We have a long tradition and strong relationship with Japan, and we take our responsibility to secure the life line of its more than 127m people seriously."

A spokesman for Verband Deutscher Reeder, the German shipowners association, added: "VDR is following the recommendations of the German government and advises members to keep a distance of at least 50 miles from Fukushima, about triple the distance people are advised on land."

Japan itself has issued a dangerous area designation extending 16 km, said Kenji Honzawa from the London office of the Japanese Shipowners' Association.

The UK's DfT said in an email statement: "Following the recent disaster in Japan, we have been working closely with colleagues at the Health Protection Agency to provide updated advice to mariners which is clear and concise.

"We expect to distribute this advice in the coming days. In the meantime, we continue to urge the industry to follow the advice issued by the Japanese authorities for vessels operating in that area. Alongside this work, we continue to monitor packages arriving in the UK for any contamination."

The UK Chamber of Shipping said that at this stage, it was restricting itself to the distribution of information to its affiliates.

Seafarer union Nautilus International, which is seeking guidance on the matter from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, reports that some shipping companies are advising ships to stay 100 to 200 miles from the Fukushima reactors.

Exposure to radiation is excluded from insurance cover and the marine insurance sector has reminded shipowners of this fact.

For example, in a circular to its members, the Norwegian Hull Club said that it wanted to remind members of the radioactive exclusion clause incorporated in all policies. The club added that it will continue to urge shipowners to "assess the situation to protect their people and property from perils".

Broker RFIB has sent out a similar reminder to the industry.

Other issues for the marine insurance sector include radioactive contamination of the supply chain including both containers and cargo.

But there are signs that maritime trade in ports closest to the earthquake-affected region is slowly being restored. LLI has identified a call at Shioyama by 1994-built, 1,911 dwt product tanker Sanpo Maru No 5 over the weekend.

The vessel is laden with 2m litres of petrol, light oil and kerosene, which are all urgently needed in the devastated area.

Article from Lloyd's List

<http://www.lloydslist.com/ll/sector/ship-operations/article358900.ece>

Published: Monday 21 March 2011