

# Lloyd's List

## Hurricane Irene ushers in fresh concerns over boxship liability

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IN A dramatic opener to the US storm season, Hurricane Irene has just finished its costly run from North Carolina to New England in the US.

Whatever its eventual cost to the industry on land, Irene has once again raised the debate over future exposures for the marine market and insurers.

In particular, cargo underwriters are growing increasingly concerned about accumulations in the new supersized container vessels.

Much has been said of the potential problems should one of these new vessels be lost at sea or run aground.

The difficulty of trying to unload a stricken super container vessel has been well debated but there have long been fears over the exposures in ports and the impact that these vessels will have.

Forget incorrect declarations of container weights, underwriters have pointed out that in future if one of these vessels was in port when a hurricane arrives the options would be limited.

The sheer scale of these vessels means that huge number of containers will need to be stacked on the quayside for an extended period both during loading and unloading, which will take some time to complete.

Therefore if the winds were to blow, the scale of potential number of containers that could be caught out in the elements grows significantly.

Underwriters in London are looking at the challenges this may present and where the risk will fall.

In future underwriters may well want to know very specific details of the cargo: is it being carried on a larger vessel; if so to and from which ports; what will the loading and unloading times be; and for how long will the container will be on the dockside and not under cover?

Underwriters who will gather in Paris for The International Union of Marine Insurance conference in just over a fortnight will have the new supersize vessels on the agenda and the indications are that the debate will not be a short lived one.

Feelings are running high in the market and Irene has done nothing to calm them. **ends**