

IUMI Policy Agenda

2. Casualty Investigations

Brief description

If very serious marine casualties occur, SOLAS requires the flag administrations involved to conduct a safety investigation. Relevant information arising from the investigations should be made available to the IMO in a timely manner so that lessons can be learnt. The “Code of the international standards and recommended practices for a safety investigation into a marine casualty or marine incident” (Casualty Investigation Code) provides assistance and defines a very serious marine casualty as “a marine casualty involving the total loss of the ship or a death or a severe damage to the environment.” There is no mandatory defined time frame for the investigation to be carried out and the findings made available. It is merely stated that the reports should be “completed as quickly as practicable”.

INTERCARGO, the International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners, published the “Bulk Carrier Casualty Report”, providing information on bulk carrier losses over a rolling 10-year period, every year. The association has found that from January 2013 to December 2022, only 19 investigation reports are available, which equates to a reporting rate of 73%. The average reporting time for 2013 to 2022 is approximately 28 months.

In comparison to previous 10-year spans, the reporting times and reporting rates have actually improved. However, accident reports are still missing from as far back as 2014 and 2015.

Due to the critical nature of improving the safety and of protecting the environment, the importance of lessons learned cannot be overstated. Without accurate investigation reports being made available in a timely manner, key improvements to safety-related requirements may come too late or not at all. For this reason IUMI supports work in the IMO’s Sub-Committee on the Implementation of IMO Instruments (III) which aims to establish a new investigation status facility in the IMO’s virtual platform. This will provide clarity for interested stakeholders on the progress of marine investigations. In addition, the work aims to facilitate timely completion of casualty investigations. This includes a requirement to provide an investigation status and defined time periods for updates on the investigations.

Timeline:

- IUMI co-sponsored document III 9/4/5 which suggests amending the Casualty Investigation Code. The paper was discussed at III 9 in August 2023.



- A new agenda item has been proposed to the Maritime Safety Committee for a new output on a comprehensive and holistic review of the Casualty Investigation Code which will be revisited by MSC in 2025.
- IUMI supports the new output and co-sponsored a joint document to this effect.

IUMI will:

- IUMI advocates for the timely publication of casualty investigation reports.
- IUMI further urges that such reports are made available for all very serious marine casualties to ensure lessons can be learned and safety improved.