

Continuing problems with nickel ore cargoes from Philippines



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Both West of England and North P&I have advised Members that nickel ore cargoes currently being presented for shipment in the Philippines are continuing to give rise to concern. The Clubs' local correspondent Pandiman Philippines advised that rain continued to fall. Where they exist, stockpiles are exposed to the elements. Many mines have no stock piles and ore is supplied directly from the exposed mine pit, hence there is no drying nor drainage of the cargo prior to shipment.



Because in February the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered the closure of 23 mines and suspended operations at a further five, the mines are keen to ship as much ore as possible and the market has seen some panic buying.

Pandiman said that certification of transportable moisture limit (TML) and moisture content issued by the mines cannot be relied upon. West of England noted that in recent cases where independent analysis has been made, all were found with moisture levels in excess of TML. Differences of 8% to 10% for moisture content and 5% for flow moisture point were found between independent analysis and mine-supplied certification.

Where a precautionary survey has been arranged, many barges were being rejected due to field tests. Loading becomes overly extended, with periods of up to 45 days being recorded, giving rise to charter party disputes in some instances.

West of England said that Members planning to load nickel ore in the Philippines should consider making arrangements for cargo samples to be tested by an independent laboratory prior to loading, irrespective of the cargo declaration and test certificates provided by the shippers.

North P&I noted that stockpiles were reported as being left open to the elements and, in some cases, the cargo was not stockpiled, instead being loaded straight from the mine pits. North said that "certificates issued by shippers should also be regarded as unreliable".

North said that it continued to recommend that Members retain an independent laboratory to test any nickel ore cargoes to be loaded in the Philippines so as to ensure that loading is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the IMSBC code. "Vessel Masters should also conduct on board checks of nickel ore cargoes presented for loading in the Philippines", North said.

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