

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 13-26

To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Nautical Inspectors, Recognized Organizations

Subject: DETENTIONS IN CHINA DUE TO MANEUVERABILITY ISSUES

Date: 9 September 2026

This Marine Safety Advisory supersedes Marine Safety Advisory No. 07-25.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) continues to receive reports of vessels unable to maneuver in high-density traffic or narrow waters in China. Incidents leading to detentions have increased this year to date for various reasons as highlighted below:

- Whilst proceeding under pilotage from CJK anchorage to Jiangyin, a Main Engine slowdown occurred requiring the vessel to anchor at Changshu port with tug assistance. The port State control (PSC) officer determined the vessel was a danger to navigation as she could not maneuver freely in the Yangtze River. The Main Engine slowed down due to a failure of the Unit No. 7 exhaust valve actuator non-return valve caused by a damaged rubber seal.
- A vessel was at a shipyard in Zhoushan where the Main Engine turbocharger was overhauled. During the sea trial, the turbocharger failed resulting in a lubrication oil low-low pressure alarm which caused the Main Engine to slow down. On returning to the shipyard, an investigation revealed an incorrect assembly of the turbocharger bearing including its sealing cover.
- A vessel had completed cargo operation at Jingtang, and while unberthing the Main Engine failed to respond to commands. With tugs in attendance the vessel re-berthed for investigation. The fault was with the air starting system. To rectify the situation, the air distributor, starting valves, and control valves were overhauled, and moisture was drained from the system.
- Main Air Compressor No. 1 failed and a dispensation was provided. However, the vessel failed to mention this to the port authorities on the arrival declaration form at Xiamen. Main Air Compressor No. 2 could not cope with the air demand, as there were also leaks from the Main Air Receiver pressure gauge connection. This resulted in the Main Engine being unable to start, the vessel was detained mainly due to failure to report.

This MSA is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

- On departure from Lianyungang, a Main Engine failure occurred. Due to the narrowness of the channel and no safe anchorage area, the vessel re-berthed. The failure was found to be due to fuel injection valves getting stuck on three units, requiring overhaul.
- On departure from Zhangjiagang and while under pilotage in the CJK deep water channel, the Main Engine shutdown due to a crack in Unit No. 4 Cylinder cover jacket, which resulted in high temperature cooling water leakage. The vessel anchored for investigation and repairs. The cause of the crack was suspected to be a result of fatigue or thermal stress.
- A vessel departed from a shipyard in Nantong with a pilot onboard when there was a Main Engine stoppage. There was insufficient cylinder lubricating oil flow from the lubricators to the cylinder liners. To prevent any damage to the cylinders, the Main Engine was stopped for further examination and verification of the lubrication system.
- A vessel called Zhoushan for bunkering operations and on preparing for departure the air pressure could not be built up above 13 Bar. an investigation found defective first and second stage valves for the Main Air Compressor No. 1, and a broken first stage piston, liner and block for the Main Air Compressor No. 2. The vessel was delayed waiting for spares.
- While approaching the berth at Yangshan under pilotage, had to be emergency anchored for repairs. A Main Engine failure occurred due to a malfunctioning interlock switch of the Turning Gear. As this was the second case of a Main Engine failure in six months, the vessel will be placed under increased PSC scrutiny.
- A vessel departed from a shipyard in Nantong with a pilot onboard when a minor oil leakage was detected due to a loose bolt on a flexible hose connected to the Main Engine Hydraulic Power Supply (HPS) pump. As a precaution the vessel returned to anchor. This leak was only observed after the engine speed increased to half ahead, and HPS pumps began operating independently under normal service pressure.
- On departure from Dongjiakou, the Main Engine could not be started. This was due to insufficient fuel pressure caused by fuel leakage due to a ruptured gasket fitted at the joint of the upper end cover of the fuel oil heater.
- A vessel was proceeding to port under pilotage from Tianjin Anchorage, and on accelerating the Main Engine speed, cooling water leakage from a cylinder liner occurred, which resulted in the vessel returning to anchorage.
- A vessel was detained at Shanghai due to a Main Engine failure while maneuvering in the North Channel. The failure was attributed to a leaking suction valve on the Main Engine Unit No. 5 fuel pump.

These incidents show the importance of promoting good maintenance for all main and auxiliary machinery with robust testing. Accordingly, the Administrator reminds shipowners, operators, and Masters that:

- When leaving a shipyard or after Main Engine repairs, a robust berth or sea trial for an extended period is required to identify any leakages or wrong assembly. A few engine kick starts are insufficient to discover these issues. This should be done prior to entering any area of high-density traffic or narrow waters in China. Otherwise, while underway when issues arise that lead to a loss of propulsion in China's narrow waters, it often leads to emergency anchoring. The subsequent investigation by the China Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), including an expanded PSC inspection may often result in a detention or off-hire.
- Planned maintenance procedures are to be implemented and inspection or maintenance intervals adjusted based on the results of the various equipment failures mentioned in the incidents above, considering this could happen on any vessel.
- When equipment or machinery is found faulty, the coastal State and local MSA must be promptly notified in addition to reporting to Class or the Administrator at technical@register-iri.com. This is a requirement of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974.
- Additionally, any inability to maneuver or loss of propulsion incident in China must be reported by the Master directly to the local authorities and to the Administrator at inspections-hk@register-iri.com.