

Stowaway problems set to increase, warns Standard Club

Sandra Speares - Thursday 16 April 2009

STOWAWAY problems are set to increase as a result of the economic climate, the Standard P&I Club is warning, *writes Sandra Speares* .

Although certain areas of the world have become higher risk because of war and natural disasters, while the number of stowaways has been steadily declining in recent years, it is once again on the increase, according to the club's statistics.

Since 2000, the club has handled 982 claims involving 2,051 stowaways. The number of claims made in 2007 was 50 but this rose 60% to 80 in 2008. Stowaway numbers totalled 87 in 2007, rising to 149 in 2008.

The Standard Club's director of loss prevention Chris Spencer said: "Stowaways are usually desperate people driven by economic and political forces.

"Just as poverty and insecurity lie behind much of today's figures for legal migration, they also drive people to stow away on ships".

Areas of particularly high risk include Africa, particularly the west and north of the continent, parts of South America and the Caribbean.

The club said in a bulletin to members that the highest threat of stowaways was from ports and terminals where the ISPS Code "is not being implemented with any vigour".

It says that "the task of preventing the stowaways in these ports from coming on board is more difficult and it is here that masters and shipowners must focus their efforts." Owners should ensure that their crews are properly trained, and provide instructions and procedures to ensure the ship can "provide a determined deterrent stopping stowaways from boarding and/or sailing with the ship".

Club statistics between 2000 and 2008 show that 45% of stowaways were found on containerships, 16% on bulk carriers, and 11% on car carriers. The number of stowaways found reflects the type of ships trading to the most high-risk areas, the Standard Club said.

Nearly 50% of stowaways come from West Africa, and the club said the region would continue to be the embarkation point for large numbers of stowaways going forward. "Masters must ensure that robust counter-stowaway measures are implemented in all west African ports. South African ports are also popular with stowaways who come from countries like Tanzania, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Mozambique."

Ports in Columbia and Venezuela are also cause for concern as stowaways attempt to enter the US.

The Standard Club has provided advice on excluding stowaways, information on how to conduct an

effective search and what a master should do if stowaways are found. “Shipowners should review their stowaway procedures and give the resources to masters and crew to prevent stowaways from boarding.”



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