Introduction to Safe Cargo Operations MGM-113 — study guide

Cargo operations move heavy, sometimes dangerous, loads through spaces nobody is meant to stand in. Safe cargo work is built on the right codes, a strong Safety Management System and a clear plan. This guide covers the frameworks and the operation itself.[1][2]

Frameworks and codes

An **SMS** is a **Safety Management System**. The **IMDG Code** is the code of practice covering the safe handling of hazardous cargo; **Class 2** of the IMDG Code is **Gases**. The **IGC Code** covers **gas carriers**. The **CSS Code** provides regulations for **cargo securing and stowage**. Cargo safety is supported by the Cargo Securing Manual (CSM), which provides detailed instructions and guidelines based on a cargo's weight, size and shape. MARPOL regulations **must** be taken into account for cargo operations.

Planning and emergency response

Before a cargo operation takes place, the document that determines the scope of the emergency response planning required is the **risk assessment**. The final stage of a cargo operation is the **debrief**.

The vessel types

Different codes apply to different cargoes: the IMDG Code for packaged dangerous goods, the IMSBC Code for solid bulk cargoes, the IBC Code for bulk liquid chemicals, and the IGC Code for gas carriers. Knowing which code applies to the cargo in front of you is the first step of safe cargo work.

Key facts to remember

- SMS = Safety Management System; CSM = Cargo Securing Manual (instructions by weight, size, shape).
- Hazardous cargo handling: IMDG Code; IMDG Class 2 = Gases.
- IGC Code → gas carriers. CSS Code → cargo securing and stowage.
- Risk assessment determines the scope of emergency response planning. Final stage of a cargo operation: debrief.
- MARPOL must be taken into account for cargo operations.
- Solid bulk cargoes are covered by the IMSBC Code (the IBC Code covers bulk liquid chemicals).

Sources

1. IMO IMDG Code (packaged dangerous goods), IMSBC Code (solid bulk cargoes) and IGC Code (gas carriers) — cargo carriage and handling.

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2. SOLAS Chapter VI/VII, the CSS Code (Cargo Securing and Stowage) and MARPOL — cargo operations, securing and pollution prevention.