Safe Cargo Handling — study guide

Cargo work moves heavy loads through spaces full of people. This guide covers lifting, dangerous goods, containers and the reporting duties during loading.[1][2]

Lifting operations

During a lifting operation: a **lift plan must be written**; the **Person in Charge (PIC)** must ensure all required controls are in place; and equipment must be checked to ensure it is fit for its intended purpose and operating conditions.

General rules and bad practice

At all stages of cargo handling, **risk assessments** should be completed and **understood**, and goods should be correctly packed, marked, **labelled** and documented by a **competent** person. Examples of bad practice include blocked drains and snagging cargo. A **dropped object** is any loose item within cargo that has the potential to drop during transit by road or sea transport.

Dangerous goods

The carriage of dangerous goods by sea is governed by the **International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code**, established by the IMO. IMDG classes include: **Explosives – Class 1**; **Flammable Liquids – Class 3**; and **Corrosive Substances – Class 8**. The transfer of hazardous waste to shore should be accompanied by a **Consignment Note**.

Containers

When working with containers, consider structural failure during loading or unloading due to overloading or lack of maintenance; being struck, knocked or blown off stacks; and getting crushed or struck by the falling end of a flat rack.

Waste and reporting

In relation to waste management, the Master is required to provide a **Garbage Management Plan**. During loading operations, these situations should be reported to the Master: the onset of adverse weather affecting loading or back-loading; an accidental discharge of oil, chemicals or fluids affecting loading or back-loading; and any incident such as an impact or fouling of anchors.

Key facts to remember

- Lifting: written lift plan; PIC ensures controls; equipment checked for purpose and conditions.
- Every stage: risk assessments understood; goods packed, marked, labelled, documented by a competent person.

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- IMDG: Class 1 explosives, Class 3 flammable liquids, Class 8 corrosives. Hazardous waste to shore needs a Consignment Note.
- Containers: structural failure, being struck/knocked/blown off stacks, crushing by a flat rack's falling end.
- Master provides the Garbage Management Plan.
- Report to the Master: adverse weather, accidental discharge, impacts/fouling of anchors.
- Bad practice: blocked drains, snagging cargo.

Sources

1. IMO International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code — classification, packing and documentation of dangerous goods (with SOLAS Chapter VII).
2. SOLAS and MARPOL — cargo securing, stowage and the Garbage Management Plan.