# Tanker Operations – Bunkering — study guide



Bunkering loads large quantities of fuel quickly, and a mistake can mean pollution, penalties and even imprisonment. This guide covers the meeting, the checklist, the roles and the fire precautions.[1][2]

## Preparation

Crew members hold a **pre-bunkering meeting** to discuss plans, identify risks, and agree upon a fixed set of operating procedures. Before the bunkering process **begins**, the **Chief Officer** must ensure that all persons on board are adequately **prepared** and have been allocated to their designated **job** and work area.

## The Master and supplier checklist

The ship's Master and supplier checklist, completed prior to the bunker delivery, includes deciding the procedures for setting up the pipelines, valves and receiving tanks; deciding the order in which the tanks will be consumed; ensuring the supplier knows the type and required amount of fuel to be loaded; and executing a "disconnection" plan on completion of the bunkering operation.

## Roles and fuel types

The crew members who play the main roles in the bunkering operation are the **Chief Officer**, the **Master** and the **Chief Engineer**. A "**Bunker Supervisor**" is a qualified person appointed by the bunker supplier to supervise the operations on behalf of the supplier. The two principal types of bunker fuel oil are **distillate fuel** and **residual fuel**. The most common means of communication during bunker operations is **VHF radio**. Charter types include the demise charter, time charter and voyage charter.

## Safety and fire precautions

Stringent measures are taken to keep fuel restricted to the designated tanks and pipelines because heavier grade oil is more difficult to clean up after a spill, and because marine fuels are pollutants toxic to marine life. Fire-safety precautions include wearing suitable working protective clothing; keeping all doors to the accommodation areas closed during bunkering and shutting off or recirculating the air-conditioning system; and never entering enclosed spaces that are not approved for entry.

## If something goes wrong

Mistakes in bunkering can result in pollution, imprisonment and high penalties. Oil-spill accidents can happen without any warning, leaving very little time to act. Following an oil spill, the Master should call a meeting to discuss the accident to avoid such accidents in the future, and record the scenario in the ship incident report form. The loading of bunker on board is a vital and critical operation, and everyone involved must take due care to ensure safety and mitigate the risk of an oil spill.

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## Key facts to remember

- Pre-bunkering meeting: plans, risks, agreed operating procedures.
- Checklist: pipelines/valves/receiving tanks, tank consumption order, fuel type and amount, disconnection plan.
- Main roles: Chief Officer, Master, Chief Engineer. Bunker Supervisor appointed by the supplier.
- Fuel types: distillate and residual. Comms: VHF radio. Charters: demise, time, voyage.
- Keep fuel in designated tanks/pipelines: heavy oil is hard to clean up and toxic to marine life.
- Fire: protective clothing, accommodation doors closed, AC shut off/recirculated, no unapproved enclosed spaces.
- Mistakes → pollution, imprisonment, penalties. After a spill: meeting + incident report.

## Sources

1. IMO MARPOL Annex I — prevention of pollution by oil (bunkering and oil-spill response).
2. International Safety Guide for Oil Tankers and Terminals (ISGOTT) — bunkering procedures, checklists and fire precautions.