

SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLLUTION  
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE  
13th session  
Agenda item 17

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### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

#### Second (2025) edition of the Ship to Ship Transfer Guide for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases (STS Transfer Guide)

Submitted by ICS, OCIMF and SIGTTO

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* MARPOL Annex I requires any tanker involved in ship to ship (STS) operations to carry on board an approved STS operations plan that takes into account the best practice noted in the IMO Manual on Oil Pollution and the OCIMF STS Transfer Guide. This document provides an overview of key updates introduced by the second edition of the *Ship to Ship Transfer Guide for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases*, published in 2025.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 4

*Output:* Not applicable

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 19

*Related documents:* None

#### Background

1 In 2009, amendments to MARPOL Annex I adopted via resolution MEPC.186(59), introduced a new chapter 8; "Prevention of pollution during transfer of oil cargo between oil tankers at sea". The amended regulations entered into force on 1 January 2011 for oil tankers of 150 gross tonnage and above engaged in the transfer of oil cargo between oil tankers at sea, requiring them to carry on-board an approved STS operations Plan.

2 The STS operations Plan is to be developed, taking into account best practice guidelines that were identified by the IMO, namely, the *IMO Manual on Oil Pollution, Section I - Prevention* and the OCIMF Ship to Ship Transfer Guide for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases (STS Transfer Guide). The Plan, describing how to conduct ship to ship (STS) operations in a safe and environmentally responsible way, would ideally be incorporated within a ship's existing safety management system as required by the International Safety Management (ISM) Code stipulated under SOLAS chapter IX, as amended.

**Salient requirements of chapter 8 to MARPOL Annex I**

3 Oil tankers of 150 gross tonnage and above engaged in the transfer of oil cargo at sea (STS operations) are to conduct such operations in accordance with the STS operations Plan, as approved by the relevant flag State Administration.

4 The person in overall advisory control (POAC) of an STS operation is required to be suitably qualified to perform all relevant duties.

5 Records of STS operations must be retained on-board for three years, and available for inspection by Parties to the MARPOL Convention.

6 Oil tankers that fall within the scope of chapter 8 to MARPOL Annex I are required to notify the coastal State who is Party to MARPOL Convention, at least 48 hours ahead of scheduled STS operations within that Party's territorial sea or exclusive economic zone.

**Introduction to STS Transfer Guide, second edition (2025)**

7 Management of health, safety, security and the environment is critical in STS operations, and the first industry guide supporting STS operational procedures was published by OCIMF in 1975. Multiple revisions since to account for operational experience, and the expertise of industry partners, led to the production of the latest edition of the STS Transfer Guide published in 2025 in collaboration with The Stichting Chemical Distribution Institute (CDI), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the Society of International Gas Tanker and Terminal Operators (SIGTTO).

8 The industry guidance, previously applicable only to MARPOL Annex I cargoes and products, has been expanded in scope since 2013, to combine collective experience of leading industry organizations to include best practices for transfer of petroleum, chemicals and liquefied gases.

9 STS transfer of liquid cargoes at sea and in sheltered waters is common practice. Experience gained over more than 50 years has proved that operations can be conducted safely and responsibly by use of correct equipment, procedures and by establishing and adhering to safe environmental operating limits.

10 The latest guide builds on the knowledge and guidance offered in previous editions and reflects updated best practice and recommendations particularly in areas as highlighted in the following section.

**Key updates**

11 A chapter highlighting the importance of human performance and decision making in STS operations has been added. This chapter introduces the concept of alternative and emerging technologies in STS operations, providing guidance on evaluation, implementation and management of risk.

12 Updated protocols for personnel transfer between vessels involved in STS operations have been included, incorporating guidance from the OCIMF information paper, *Transfer of Personnel by Crane Between Vessels*. This chapter aims to share expertise with a wider audience with a view to improve safety during operations involving transfer of personnel by encouraging a risk-based approach.

13 A consolidated chapter on cargo procedures has been developed, with four distinct sections to differentiate and outline specific procedures for MARPOL Annex I oil cargoes, MARPOL Annex II chemical cargoes, LPG cargoes and LNG cargoes, respectively.

14 Enhanced guidance for STS equipment, including fenders, cargo and vapour hoses and mooring equipment has been provided. The guidance also includes updated fender sizing calculations based on current best practices thus providing optimal hull damage protection to ships engaged in STS operations.

15 To improve process integrity, the second edition includes revised ship to ship safety checklists to sequentially cover the STS operation from before commencement and mooring, pre-transfer conference and agreements, checks during transfer and after transfer following disconnection.

### **Further information**

16 The second (2025) edition of the STS Transfer Guide reinforces the role of human factors as a shared responsibility for the wider maritime industry. As the definitive best practice of safe operational procedures for STS operations, it provides an important guidance for implementation of obligations required under MARPOL Annex I, as referenced in the Convention itself.

17 Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status are invited to note the latest edition of the STS Transfer Guide, which can be purchased at the following location: <https://shop.witherbys.com/ship-to-ship-transfer-guide-for-petroleum-chemicals-and-liquefied-gases-second-edition/>. A list of the contents of the 2025 STS Transfer Guide is included in the annex to this document for the benefit of interested parties.

18 A limited number of hard copies will also be available to delegates visiting the IMO library.

### **Action requested of the Sub-Committee**

19 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the information provided.

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## ANNEX

# Ship to Ship Transfer Guide for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases, Second Edition (2025)

## Contents

Foreword | Introduction to the second edition | Purpose and scope | Glossary | Abbreviations | Bibliography

### 1 General principles

1.1 Control of operations 1.2 Risk assessments 1.3 Ship to Ship operations plan 1.4 Manning for Ship to Ship operations and the prevention of fatigue 1.5 Training and familiarization of ship's personnel 1.6 Security

### 2 Human factors

2.1 General 2.2 Identification and analysis of Safety Critical Tasks 2.3 Human-centred design 2.4 Procedures 2.5 Leadership 2.6 Confidence to stop work or speak up 2.7 Learning 2.8 Fatigue 2.9 Personnel levels 2.10 Skills to respond to emerging situations 2.11 Communications

### 3 Conditions and requirements

3.1 Ship to Ship compatibility 3.2 Notification to and approval from authorities 3.3 Transfer area 3.4 Environmental conditions 3.5 Quality assurance of Ship to Ship service providers

### 4 Managing hazards and risks for Ship to Ship operations

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### 5 Personnel transfers

5.1 Introduction 5.2 Transfer using a Personnel Transfer Basket and ship's crane 5.3 Responsibilities during personnel transfer 5.4 Personnel transfer by crane plan 5.5 Transfer preparations 5.6 Personnel transfer 5.7 Contingency and emergency planning

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6.1 General communications 6.2 Language 6.3 Pre-arrival communications 6.4 Navigational warnings 6.5 Communications during approach, mooring and unmooring 6.6 Communications during cargo transfer operations 6.7 Procedures in case of communication failure

### 7 Operational preparations

7.1 General 7.2 Joint Plan of Operations 7.3 Preparation of ships 7.4 Lightering Support Vessels 7.5 Navigational signals

### 8 Equipment

8.1 Fenders 8.2 Cargo transfer hoses 8.3 Mooring equipment 8.4 Deck lighting 8.5 Ancillary equipment for Ship to Ship operations 8.6 Equipment noise levels

## **9 Manoeuvring and mooring**

**9.1** Basic principles **9.2** Manoeuvring alongside at sea with two ships under power  
**9.3** Manoeuvring alongside a ship already at anchor **9.4** Manoeuvring for in port operations  
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## **10 Cargo procedures**

**10.1** Cargo procedures – MARPOL Annex I (Oil) **10.2** Cargo procedures – MARPOL Annex II (chemicals)  
**10.3** Cargo procedures – Liquefied Petroleum Gas Carriers **10.4** Liquefied Natural Gas Carriers

## **11 Unmooring**

**11.1** Preparations for unmooring **11.2** Unmooring procedure

## **12 Emergencies**

**12.1** Contingency planning and emergency response procedures **12.2** Additional considerations for Liquefied Natural Gas  
**12.3** Emergency signal **12.4** Emergency situations  
**12.5** Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plan, Shipboard Marine Pollution Emergency Plan  
**12.6** Emergency preparedness **12.7** Emergency notifications **12.8** Cessation of Ship to Ship operations

## **A-E Appendices**

Appendix A: Ship to Ship Safety Checklist

Appendix B: Crane plan – transfer of personnel by crane between vessels

Appendix C: Fender suitability calculations

Appendix D: Hose string connection guidance

Appendix E: Example – Liquefied Natural Gas Ship to Ship compatibility questionnaire

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