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LATEST UPDATES FROM UKRAINE

Our correspondent, CIS Pandi, has published a bulletin summarizing the situation in Ukrainian ports throughout 2024 and how the effects of the war have impacted trade in the region. The published bulletin also includes important recommendations for ships continuing their commercial activities in the area and information on the regulations in place. (p.2)



THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL MARINAS FOR YACHTS

Marinas are specialized marine areas that provide shelter, maintenance, and repair services for small boats and yachts. The rapidly developing marina sector in Turkey significantly contributes to marine tourism and local economic development. Marinas offer a safe and comfortable environment for boat owners through their various services, while also establishing important risk acceptance criteria for insurance companies. This article discusses in detail the facilities offered by marinas and the importance of yacht insurance. (p. 3)

LATEST UPDATES FROM UKRAINE

Our correspondent in Ukraine, CIS Pandi, has published a newsletter on the current situation and an overview of past events in Ukraine since the war began. Their advice and notification of the rules for vessels calling at the ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk, and Pivdennyi are as follows:

- During air raid alerts, cargo operations are prohibited.
- A curfew is imposed in the Odesa Region between 00:00 – 05:00 LT.
- Navigation inside the harbor is allowed between 07:00 – 19:00 LT.
- While passing through the corridor, the AIS signal must be turned off, and the navigation radars must be turned on.
- When 5 miles from the Northern waiting area and during the period when the vessel is located in a Ukrainian port, the AIS signal must be turned on, and the navigation radars must be turned off.
- During the period of martial law in Ukraine, the use of electronic communication equipment, television, video and audio devices, external video surveillance cameras, and video recording for capturing infrastructure objects (including seaports) is prohibited. To comply with the aforementioned restrictions, the Masters of sea vessels calling at the Odesa region ports must turn off the external video surveillance cameras available on the vessel. If it's technically impossible to do so, they must physically block their operation (by using camera covers or other objects).
- All vessels transiting to/from the ports of Ukraine are obliged to be in constant communication with the Coordination Center of SE "USPA" through the vessel's agent and comply with all instructions given by the Coordination Center.
- To avoid danger from floating mines or false recognition of vessels passing through the area of military threat, the vessel should monitor the mine situation during the passage of the route at a certain time. The vessel's transition through the combat zone should be carried out as quickly as possible, without any stops.
- Bunker supply in Ukrainian ports is available and provided by trucks. The average capacity of a truck is 25 tons. There may be separate charges for protective booms, fire brigade attendance, and security service, invoiced via the port agents.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL MARINAS FOR YACHTS

Marinas are sea areas enclosed by a breakwater or separated within a harbor, used for the accommodation, maintenance, repair, and other services of small boats and yachts. These facilities play a significant role in the expansion of yachting and maritime activities. Additionally, marinas are a crucial part of maritime tourism and local economic development. Like the rest of the world, the marina industry in Turkey, a peninsula surrounded by seas on three sides, is growing every day. Marinas primarily offer many opportunities to yacht owners while minimizing damage caused by third parties.

Among these opportunities are pedestal water and electricity, internet, solid waste and sewage collection and separation, showers/WC, hazardous waste area, 24/7/365 security, fuel stations, CCTV and surveillance, card access system, tower marina traffic, communication via radio, market, yacht agencies, brokers, and charter services.



Insurance companies assess various risk acceptance criteria when providing coverage for yachts and vessels. Among the criteria for yacht insurance, the security of marinas where the yacht is located is extremely important, and professional marina wintering is considered a prerequisite. This way, potential security vulnerabilities, damage from natural disasters, and emerging risks are minimized. If a marina is weak in terms of security (e.g., uncontrolled areas, low security measures, or inadequate protection against bad weather conditions), the insurance premium may be higher, or certain insurance coverages may not be offered.

The marina's location, security measures, maintenance services, and management approach are important factors in determining the content of an insurance policy. For yacht owners to best evaluate their insurance coverage, they need to consider the facilities and regulations provided by the marinas.

Yacht insurance policies cover both hull and third-party liability insurance. Due to these features, marinas, which serve as wintering areas for yachts, provide security against both hull damage such as collisions and risks like theft. Visitor entry and exit at marinas are controlled, with surveillance and security maintained at higher levels than in an unprotected harbor. Although yacht insurance is not mandatory, if the insured wants to keep their yacht in a marina, the marina may require a yacht policy as a prerequisite before signing the accommodation service contract. From this perspective, yacht policies become indispensable for owners.

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT FOR YACHT OWNERS

Every year, numerous yacht incidents occur due to negligence, weather conditions, technical failures, or external factors. These incidents can lead to significant financial losses and serious safety hazards. So, how can yacht owners prevent the most common loss?

Collision with Submerged Objects and Hull Damage

One of the most common causes of yacht accidents is collisions with unseen underwater objects. Rocks, reefs, wreckage, and floating debris can cause significant damage, especially at night or in low-visibility conditions.

Preventive Measures:

- Carefully plan your route using Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) and updated navigational data.
- Be extra cautious when navigating in shallow waters and obtain local maritime advice if necessary.
- Conduct preliminary surveys using a tender boat or sonar devices before entering unknown areas.
- Regularly inspect your hull to detect hidden cracks or potential water ingress points.



Storm Damage and Weather-Related Risks

Storms and strong winds can pose significant risks, whether your yacht is moored at a marina or sailing offshore. Additionally, post-storm conditions often increase the presence of floating debris, which can further threaten navigational safety.

Preventive Measures:

- Regularly monitor weather forecasts using maritime meteorological reports (NAVTEX, VHF, AIS, GPS systems).
- Secure mooring lines and add extra fenders before severe weather conditions.
- If relocating to a marina is not an option, use storm mooring techniques and anchoring methods suitable for extreme conditions.
- Isolate electrical systems and batteries to prevent short circuits caused by water intrusion.

Vandalism and Theft Risks

Yachts moored at marinas or left unattended are vulnerable to theft and vandalism, especially during the off-season.

Preventive Measures:

- Enhance security with CCTV cameras and alarm systems.
- Remove fuel, electronics, and valuables from your yacht when not in use.
- Store your yacht in a 24/7 monitored marina during the winter months.
- Conduct regular security inspections to ensure hatches and access points remain secure.

Fire and Explosion Hazards

Fires can result from faulty wiring, fuel leaks, or corrosion. High-temperature equipment and galley accidents also pose significant risks.

Preventive Measures:

- Inspect fuel systems and gas lines regularly for leaks or deterioration.
- Test fire suppression systems periodically to ensure they are fully operational.
- Establish a fire escape plan and train all crew members accordingly.
- Check electrical cables and circuit breakers for signs of overload or damage.

Collisions with Other Vessels and Navigational Safety

In high-traffic areas, collisions are a major risk. Jet skis, small boats, and inexperienced operators further increase this danger.



Preventive Measures:

- Follow maritime traffic regulations and remain vigilant in busy waterways.
- Reduce speed when navigating through narrow passages and port entrances.
- Maintain constant VHF radio communication with surrounding vessels.

Emergency Preparedness and Insurance Precautions

All yacht owners must have a well-structured emergency plan and share it with their crew. Unexpected situations at sea can occur at any time.

Preventive Measures:

- Keep life jackets, fire blankets, and first aid kits on board at all times.
- Maintain backup navigation systems and communication devices for emergencies.
- Establish emergency evacuation routes and conduct drills with your crew.
- Review your insurance policy coverage to ensure it adequately protects against potential risks.

FIRES ONBOARD THE GRANDE BRASILE AND GRANDE CONGO (FEBRUARY 2025)

In February 2025, two separate roll-on/roll-off container ships (ConRo) owned by the Italian company Grimaldi Lines experienced serious fire incidents. The ship Grande Brasile caught fire on February 18 while sailing in the English Channel; just a few days later, a similar fire occurred on the Grande Congo in the Atlantic Ocean. These incidents highlight notable details regarding the causes of the fires, onboard technical interventions, the spread of the fires, firefighting efforts, and their impact on the ships.

Fire onboard the Grande Brasile (February 18, 2025)

Built in 2000, the 56,600 GT Grande Brasile issued a distress call while en route from Antwerp to Le Havre, carrying containers and vehicles. The incident occurred in the Dover Strait, approximately 15 nautical miles off Ramsgate. At 09:35 local time, a fire broke out on one of the vehicle decks and was initially controlled by the ship's fixed CO2 fire suppression systems. However, at around 16:25, a second fire was detected, escalating the emergency once again. This indicated that the initial fire had not been fully extinguished and had possibly spread to another part of the ship. Post-incident photos showed burn marks near the ship's funnel and blistered paint on several decks, suggesting that the damage was confined to a specific area of the ship.

In a statement to the European press, the ship's operator, Grimaldi, mentioned that they had identified some preliminary indications of the fire's cause but preferred not to speculate until the investigation was complete. Considering that the Grande Brasile frequently carries second-hand vehicles and containers (West Africa route), it is believed that the fire might have been cargo-related. Similar incidents in the Grimaldi fleet, such as the 2023 disaster on the Grande Costa D'Avorio in Newark, were traced back to faulty second-hand vehicle batteries loaded at the port. Such vehicle and battery-related fire risks are a significant concern for ro-ro ships.



As soon as a "Mayday" call was received from Grande Brasile, authorities from the UK, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium coordinated a large-scale rescue and firefighting operation. Under the direction of HM Coastguard, a fixed-wing reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters were dispatched to the area. Additionally, two RNLI lifeboats, a French rescue vessel, and a helicopter from Belgium joined the operation. Initially, the ship's crew attempted to tackle the fire using their own resources and activated the onboard CO2 system.

However, when a second fire broke out, the decision was made to evacuate the crew for their safety. Around 22:00, the 28 crew members left the ship in lifeboats and were evacuated with the help of a nearby tugboat. The personnel were met by medical teams at Ramsgate Port, and it was confirmed that there were no injuries. Firefighting efforts continued after the ship was evacuated; a tugboat owned by Dutch salvage and rescue company secured a tow line to the burning ship in the evening to gain control. Other support vessels joined in the cooling operations, while a French sea rescue vessel stood by around the burning ship. Firefighting teams and rescue specialists worked intensively to prevent the flames from spreading within the ship and reaching critical areas, such as fuel tanks.



As a result of the fires, it was reported that the Grande Brasile lost its main engine power and was unable to maneuver. Therefore, British authorities allowed the ship to be towed to port during daylight hours when weather conditions permitted. On Sunday, February 23rd, the controlled ship was successfully towed to the Euroterminal dock at the Port of Antwerp, Belgium, with the assistance of four powerful tugboats. While all evacuated crew members were rescued, it was found that some of the cargo on board had been damaged by the fire. Reports released after the incident indicated that cargo deliveries would be delayed and that there would be significant cargo loss and damage. The Grande Brasile is still insured by the Britannia P&I Club and operates on the North Europe-West Africa routes through Grimaldi's Atlantic Container Line unit. Damage assessment and inspection work began on the ship after the fire; although detailed technical evaluations are ongoing to repair the affected areas and return the ship to service, the vessel has been declared a total loss.

Fire onboard Grande Congo (February 21, 2025)

Just three days after the Grande Brasile incident, another fire broke out on a ConRo vessel from the Grimaldi fleet, the 2010-built (47,600 GT) Grande Congo. While en route from the Port of Valencia, Spain, to the east coast of the USA with vehicles and containers, the Grande Congo issued a fire alarm on one of its ro-ro decks on February 21st, off the coast of Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean. The crew promptly implemented firefighting protocols and managed to extinguish the flames before they could spread. It was reported that the fire was quickly brought under control and did not cause significant damage or injuries. The ship continued its voyage without the need for further evacuation and arrived at the Port of Newport News, Virginia, USA, on February 24th, where it anchored. Authorities boarded the ship upon its arrival at the port to investigate the incident and assess the cause and extent of the damage. The fire on the Grande Congo is also believed to have originated from cargo on the vehicle deck. While Grimaldi has not yet provided detailed information about the second fire incident, it is expected that fire safety measures and cargo procedures within the fleet will be reviewed following these consecutive incidents.

The fires on the Grande Brasile and Grande Congo within the past ten days have highlighted the serious risks of vehicle and container-related fires on ro-ro vessels. It is fortunate that there were no casualties among the crew in both incidents, although the fire on the Grande Brasile resulted in the loss of the ship's operational capability and significant cargo damage. These incidents underscore the critical importance of onboard automatic fire suppression systems (such as CO2 systems) and emergency response plans. Additionally, they have raised the need for stricter safety protocols for transporting second-hand vehicles or hazardous cargoes, such as lithium-ion batteries. Grimaldi Lines is conducting a comprehensive investigation in cooperation with relevant authorities to determine the causes of these fires and evaluate measures to prevent similar incidents in the future. The findings from this process will provide valuable lessons for the industry regarding ship safety and hazardous cargo management.



In maritime terminology, a “wake” is the trail of water left behind by a moving vessel. This trail indicates the path the vessel has taken and continues for a while after the vessel has passed. The size and intensity of a wake can indicate the vessel's size and speed.

The phrase ‘in its wake’ is used to describe the effects or events that follow a significant incident or action. Much like the trail left behind by a vessel, this phrase emphasizes the changes and impacts that follow an event.