

**Welcome to the latest edition of TT Talk, number 60 in the series. We belatedly wish all our readers a happy new year.**

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### **1. Indian Ocean tsunami**

2004 ended with the terrible news of the earthquake and sea waves that overwhelmed and destroyed many coastal communities in the countries of the Indian ocean. Our sympathies go out to all those who have lost relatives, friends or colleagues in this tragedy.

### **2. Protection against windstorms**

Although the tsunami caused such widespread damage to coastal properties, most of the ports in the region reported relatively few problems, while ships at sea hardly noticed anything. While the Club's exposure to other natural disasters during 2004, including hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne that struck the Caribbean in rapid succession in August and September, has been relatively modest, it is a salutary reminder of the threat that windstorms pose to container operations in ports and terminals in many areas and not just in the tropics.

The Club provided brief advice to members operating terminals and similar depots, about the precautions to be taken to reduce the damage caused by wind storms and is preparing a more detailed loss prevention guidance for publication later this year. The guidelines have been developed as the result of the Club's experience of storms in all parts of the world over many years.

Every terminal should have a well thought-out emergency plan which can be activated when wind storms threaten the area.

Gantry cranes, straddle-carriers and similar equipment are extremely vulnerable to high winds. Typhoon Maemi destroyed eight gantry cranes and caused significant damage. Even if they do not blow the crane over, high winds can push rail-mounted cranes along the track so that they crash into the next crane along. Cranes and similar equipment should therefore be subject to comprehensive tie-down procedures, and the booms secured in the upright position. Before securing cranes, if possible move them well clear of ships. Straddle carriers should be parked together as a block, so that they can provide some support to each other.

Smaller vehicles and handling equipment should be parked wherever possible inside warehouses or sheds to protect them from flying debris.

Empty containers, with their large "sail area" and relatively low weight, are particularly susceptible to high winds, and once on the move, they can do considerable damage. Not only will they sustain damage themselves, they can also inflict it on other cargo, buildings, lighting columns, fences and so on. Container stacks should anyway be reduced when high winds are forecast and, wherever possible, containers should be interlocked with securing cones to create bigger, heavier and more secure blocks. Lashing gears and fittings should be checked and maintained regularly.

Buildings should be inspected regularly and any defects put right. Particular attention should be paid to roof and wall panelling: the day before a hurricane is due to arrive is not the best time to discover that a roof panel needs fixing. Similarly flooding can result if drains and gutters are not maintained. The Club has seen many claims for flood damage to cargo which

arose because drainage systems had become blocked or broken and were therefore incapable of handling the quantities of water dumped on the terminal by a storm system.

Do not forget that many staff will understandably be concerned about the safety of their own families and property and will therefore probably want to go home early. Heavy traffic may prolong the transportation time for your staff getting home. The police or local authorities may order residents to evacuate the area and go somewhere safer. You therefore need to factor in these concerns and work to an earlier close-down time when creating a timetabled plan.

Once the storm has passed, your priority is obviously to get your show back into full operation as quickly as possible. You may however be hampered by lack of power supplies because lines have been severed. It is a sensible precaution to have contingency arrangements for secondary power supplies, including perhaps a number of mobile generators available on site to provide emergency power to things like refrigerated container stacks. All batteries for fork-lift trucks should be left on charge when work stops before the storm. You should maintain adequate stocks of spares on site.

Damage from flying debris can also be extensive and you may need to organise clear-up teams to remove items and make areas safe.

Communications may also be difficult if telephone systems (both fixed and mobile) have been disrupted.

Remember that the heart of your operation is not the cranes or the containers, but lies in the computer and IT systems. Ensure that you have proper back-up available, preferably at an off-site facility, and that your own main computer systems are in a building that is secure against storm and flood. You may also want to remove any vulnerable computer and similar control equipment from the cabs of vehicles and cranes, and store it somewhere safe.

The Club, too, has contingency procedures in place for windstorms. If you are in an area that is under threat, place a call to your regular claims handler or underwriter to find out what you should do if your facility is damaged. If our office is equally under threat and has been closed as a precaution, your call will be re-routed automatically to an executive from another office.

### **3. What use is an old container?**

It is almost ten years since our sister publication House-to-House reported on an initiative by Safmarine to make thousands of redundant freight containers available for community projects in South Africa. Today we have reports on how this programme and the general availability of redundant freight containers in South Africa are transforming life for many small communities and entrepreneurs. From cinemas to funeral parlours, cell-phone repair shops to hairdressing salons, containers are finding new uses undreamt of by the late Malcom McLean. For more, see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1396852,00.html>

### **4. Congratulations**

We extend our congratulations to RIF Worldwide Ltd, a forwarding and logistics company based in Slough, UK, winners of the 2004 Supply Chain Management prize in the annual freight service awards organised by the British International Freight Association (BIFA).

This is the sixteenth year running that the Club has sponsored an award in the competition, confirming the Club's continuing long-term cooperation with BIFA. The citation for RIF Worldwide stated that they had "met the challenging targets posed by their customer to resolve supply chain management weaknesses that threatened its viability. Through fostering collaboration between suppliers and distributors, RIF contributed to turning round their customer's business by demonstrating cost and performance improvements that enabled their customer to restore its distributors' confidence."

The award was presented by Paul Neagle, the Chief Executive of the Club's management company, at BIFA's annual lunch in London on January 24. Commenting on the award, Paul noted that the Club strove for excellence in its own service levels and to be the industry leader in the scope of its cover, and added that "we are glad to promote and recognise similar excellence by logistics and transport service providers, and we congratulate RIF Worldwide on their success."

## **5. Melting snow seen: call the fire brigade**

Ever anxious to bring you the news stories you may have missed, we are indebted to The Telegraph, the organ of record for the county of Mitchell, Illinois for this information about an incident at Pontoon Beach, just east of St Louis, Missouri on December 18th. The driver of a truck carrying organic acid had stopped at the Flying J Travel Plaza there when he noted liquid leaking from the vehicle. The local police and firefighters quickly cleared people from the area before calling for assistance from the Madison County hazardous materials team. Wearing protective suits and breathing apparatus, specialists opened the cargo space, only to find that the liquid was melting snow dripping off a pallet that the driver had picked up earlier in Ohio.

Chief Eddie Lee, of the Mitchell Fire Department defended the authorities against accusations that their intervention had been an over-reaction to some melting snow, saying they "couldn't take any chances. That thing was in a heavily-populated area". We agree with the fire chief.

## **6. Conclusion**

We hope that you will have found the above items interesting. If you would like to have further information about any of them, or have any comments you would like to make, please email the editor at [tttalk@ttclub.com](mailto:tttalk@ttclub.com). We look forward to hearing from you.

Andrew Trasler  
Editor  
On behalf of  
TTMS (UK) Ltd, London

David Martin-Clark  
Legal Editor  
Shipping & Insurance Consultant  
Maritime Arbitrator  
Commercial Disputes Mediator

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