Single window becomes mandatory

The IMO Facilitation Committee during its 45th session approved amendments making the use of single window systems for electronic information mandatory.

Notice to: Ship Owners/ Managers/ Operators | Surveyors/Auditors

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When ships enter and leave port, detailed and specific administrative information needs to be exchanged with the authorities ashore. This used to mean paperwork. But Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) is quicker, better and more efficient for everybody – and EDI is a mandatory requirement (since April 2019) under the IMO's International Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (the FAL Convention).

This means that public authorities are required to set up electronic systems for ship reporting formalities. This applies to all the documentation needed to fulfil the standard regulatory requirements – the cargo declaration, dangerous goods declaration, crew manifests, vessel details and so on.

Port authorities, maritime administrations, customs, police, immigration, health and agricultural authorities and all other relevant bodies must be part of the port EDI system. Ships' agents, terminal operators, tug and pilot services and others can also be included - making things quicker, simpler and more effective for everyone.

IMO has also developed the IMO Compendium, a technical reference manual for software developers within the relevant public authorities. The IMO Compendium harmonizes the data elements requested by the various public authorities and standardizes the electronic messages. IMO has also issued guidelines for setting up a maritime single window.

All this will help make cross-border trade simpler and the logistics chain more efficient, for the more than 10 billion tons of goods which are traded by sea annually across the globe.

The Single window becomes mandatory

The Facilitation Committee, at its forty-fifth session (1 to 7 June 2021), approved the new version of the IMO Compendium on facilitation and electronic business, that can be found here. The Committee recalled that this new version of the IMO Compendium refers to the data elements related to the FAL Convention, as well as data sets beyond those mandated by the FAL Convention. The IMO Compendium is available on Excel and HTML formats and includes the overview of changes from the last version.

The FAL Convention encourages use of the so-called "single window" concept in which all the many agencies and authorities involved exchange data via a single point of contact. The maritime single window system allows for the streamlining of procedures, via electronic systems, for provision of information related to the arrival, stay and departure of the ship itself, and data on its crew, passengers and cargo, in accordance with the requirements of the FAL Convention.

IMO supports Flag Administrations to prepare for electronic data exchange, with national and regional seminars and work shops.

Two sets of guidelines are to be developed to support further digitalization of shipping and ports including:
- Guidance for authentication, integrity and confidentiality of content for the purpose of exchange via maritime single window; and
- Guidelines for harmonized communication and electronic exchange of operational data for port calls.

Act now

Ship Owners / Managers / Operators should take into consideration this new requirement.

Source: IMO