



Loss Prevention Circular No. 08-06

## Update: Container losses from vessels using fully automatic container locks

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### Background

As a result of several container losses from large container ships in the past six months, the shipping industry has taken the issue of fully automatic container locks (FATs) very seriously. Various investigations of the potential problems with lashing arrangements involving FATs have been initiated to clarify what measures may be necessary to avoid future losses. This circular highlights some of the current activities in this respect in the industry.

### Gard's Member survey

As a part of our investigation of the container losses, Gard conducted a survey amongst some of its members. The survey has revealed that the losses experienced by the members of Gard seem to be limited to one type of FATs available in the market. Our recommendation in Loss Prevention Circular No. 05-06 to contact the respective supplier of such locks to seek clarification of any limitations is therefore still valid. It has been suggested to hold a meeting of International Group's "Ship Technical Committee" on this issue. It is expected that this meeting will take place this autumn, when more evidence is available from the parties mentioned below. The intention is to also invite the classification societies to attend this meeting.

### Actions by Classification societies

In a letter from Germanischer Lloyd dated 16 March 2006, the potential problem was highlighted and future limitations in the use of FATs were discussed. However, in their letter of 27 April 2006, Germanischer Lloyd clarified their current position: The letter states that the approved container stowage plans, with their respective stowage systems, continue to be valid unconditionally and that a general and type independent recommendation for the substitution of FATs should not be issued. GL's tests also confirmed that FATs with a flange and sufficiently dimensioned locking nose obtained good results. According to the press, GL has at a recent seminar also pointed to other factors such as the placement of heavy containers, inadequate container lashings and the age of the containers as potential causes for the recent losses. None of the other classification societies have so far concluded in this issue.

### Actions by the industry

Owners, suppliers, authorities and researchers are joining forces in a two year project investigating lashing loads to improve safety and efficiency of container, Ro-Ro and heavy lift transportation. The Joint Industry Project, named Lashing@Sea, was initiated by the Maritime Research Institute Netherlands (MARIN). The project is aiming to improve the safety and efficiency of lashings. This will be achieved by investigating the mechanisms of lashing loads and identifying the key parameters. FATs will be one of many technologies investigated by this project group.

### Actions by the manufacturers

One of the major manufacturers of lashing equipment has chosen to recall their FATs from the market. In its press release, this manufacturer stated that they did this as a precaution despite the fact that they had not received reports of equipment failure.

We have been informed that at least one major manufacturer continues to sell FATs subsequent to additional testing and approval by Germanischer Lloyd. According to the manufacturer, no container losses have been reported due to using their type of FAT.

### No implication on the P&I cover

The use of fully automatic container locks does not have any implication on the scope of P&I cover, as long as the locks used are class approved and the container stowage complies with applicable regulations.

### Recommendation

Gard is still of the opinion that it is prudent for shipowners to seek further information from the approving classification society and container lock manufacturer/supplier concerning the suitability and conditions for use of the specific type(s) of fully automatic container lock(s) that are being used or are intended to be used on board their ships, in order to minimise the risk of future losses.

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