



The 12th International Fujairah Bunkering & Fuel Oil Forum Fuelling The Future - Solutions & Challenges

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FUJAIRAH
BUNKERING
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FUJCON 2021: Sulphur off-specs in bunker fuel samples more than doubled on year in 2021, observes VPS

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International fuel testing and inspection company VPS has recorded a jump in the number of off-spec bunker fuel samples – particularly for 0.50% sulphur content – in the current year to date, observes the Managing Director AMEA at VPS.

“Global sulphur non-compliance stood at about 3% for last year and this number increased to about 7% for 2021,” Captain Rahul Choudhuri told delegates at the 12th Fujairah International Bunkering and Fuel Oil Virtual Forum (FUJCON 2021).

“I believe the issue of the marginally off-spec, that is the 0.51% to 0.53% sulphur, will continue to plague this industry. This is because a vast majority of these fuels are being blended close to the limit –with sulphur content in about 50% of bunker samples tested within the 0.47% to 0.50% percentage range.

“However, it is worth noting that whereas the chances of getting higher non-compliance so far is certainly prevalent in Europe and America; the sulphur compliance in the Middle East is typically good. This is positive news for Fujairah, although some off-spec sulphur has been observed in Dubai, Jeddah and Kuwait.”

“So there is a challenge for the industry as to how this is handled. Do we need tighter regulations where, for example, fuels with more than 0.47% sulphur content cannot be supplied? Or do we allow the market this flexibility and then take this risk?”

Captain Choudhuri further referred to VPS test data which showed a rising trend for bunker fuel off-specs this year; the company encountered 12% off-spec cases in 2021, compared to 8% off-spec cases last year.

“The majority of off-specs VPS detected in tests were from bunker fuel samples lifted at European ports,” he shares.

“In fact, Europe stands out at more than 30% of that number [12% of off-spec cases in 2021], followed by South America, North America, and Russia. Whereas, off-specs cases in the Middle East and Asia are extremely low.”

Captain Choudhuri notes flashpoint non-compliance to be amongst issues found within these off-spec bunker fuel samples.

“In terms of statutory compliance, the flashpoint of not less than 60°C for marine fuels has been set by the IMO and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS),” he states.

“Flashpoint is an important measure for maintaining safety in shipping and the industry has a responsibility to keep it that way.

“There is a renewed initiative by some members of the maritime industry to lower the flashpoint level; possibly for commercial reasons.

“Trying to reduce this flashpoint level will be tantamount to going down the slippery slope of reduced safety on board ships – and this must not be allowed.”

A series of interviews conducted by Manifold Times as part of pre-event coverage for FUJCON 2021 can be found below:

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