



***FINDINGS OF CONCERN***

**Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach**

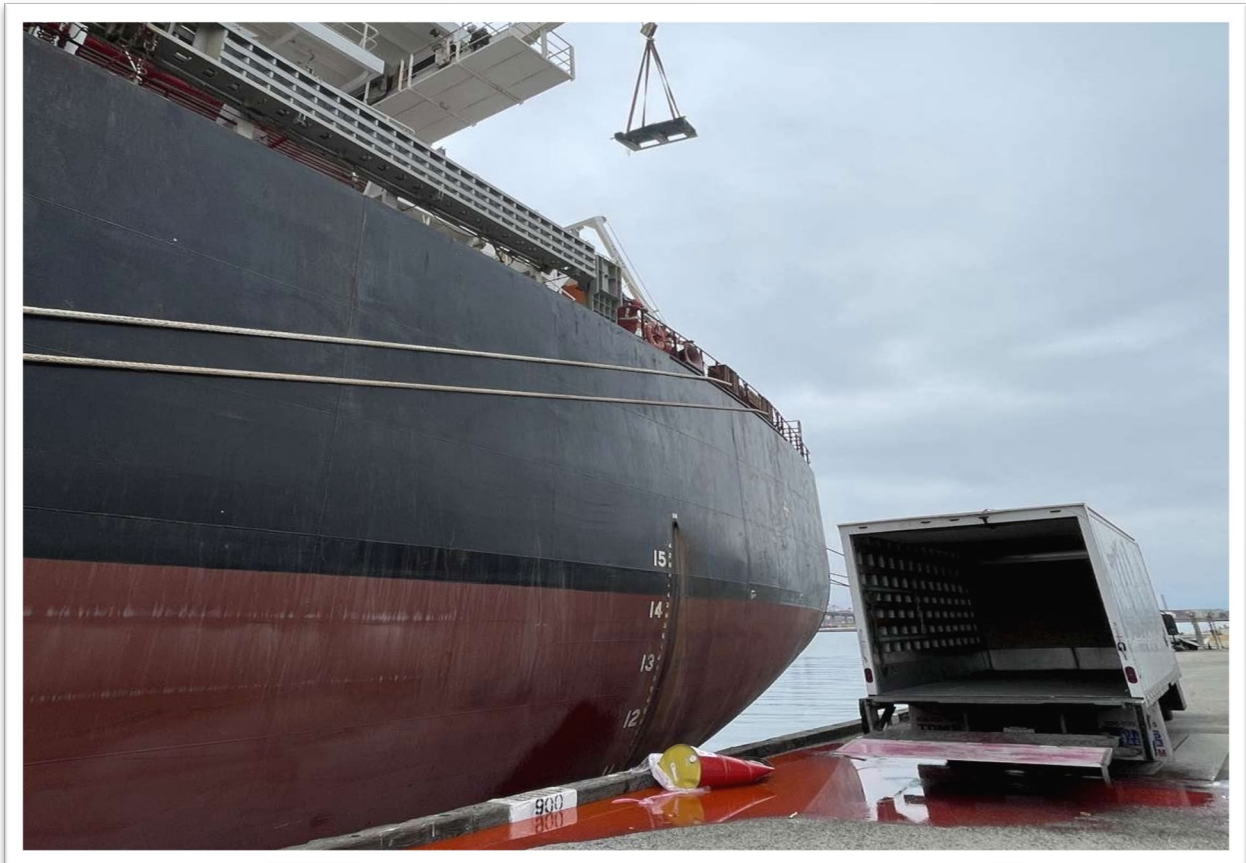
February 20, 2025  
Los Angeles, CA

Findings of Concern 001-25

**RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH USING SHIPPING PALLETS FOR  
CRANE LOADING OPERATIONS**

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. In October of 2024, while moored alongside the inner harbor of Long Beach, CA, a bulk carrier was loading barrels of hydraulic oil utilizing the ship's crane. During the onloading, two barrels of hydraulic oil were secured to a wooden shipping pallet which was lifted by loading straps attached to the ship's crane. As it was being lifted, the wooden pallet broke causing the two barrels of hydraulic oil to fall and break open onto the concrete pier, resulting in pollutants contaminating the waterway.



Post incident photo depicting the broken pallet suspended by the ship's crane and a damaged hydraulic oil barrel. Approximately 50 gallons of hydraulic oil was subsequently released into the harbor after the pallet failed during loading operations. Photo provided by U.S. Coast Guard.



**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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Contributing Factors and Analysis. During onloading operation, two barrels of hydraulic oil fell when the wooden shipping pallet being used to lift them broke. One barrel landed on the pier while the other entered the water, resulting in an estimated 50 gallons of oil being discharged into the harbor. The primary contributing factor was the failure of the wooden shipping pallet used to transport the hydraulic oil barrels, which was unable to withstand the weight of the load, coupled with excessive force tension due to the single point attachment rigging configuration. Secondary contributing factors included the vessel's loading procedures and potential absence of additional safety measures to secure heavy barrels during transfer by crane.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures to mitigate the risks associated with the contributing factors identified above:

- **Ship's Responsibility:** Vessels should implement a pre-loading quality assurance inspection protocol for all equipment and materials used in support of onloading and offloading operations, especially pallets used for heavy loads or hazardous materials. Crewmembers should verify that pallets are structurally sound and suitable for the weight they are intended to carry. Regular crew training on safe load-handling procedures, including the proper assessment of loading materials, will also enhance safety and prevent incidents.
- **Facility Responsibility:** Facilities providing materials to support vessel loading operations, such as pallets, should ensure all supplied equipment meets sufficient load-bearing criteria for the intended cargo. Facilities should inspect pallets for structural integrity and certify them for safe use with specified weight limits. Clear communication of pallet capacity and intended use to vessel personnel is recommended to avoid misuse and enhance overall safety during onloading operations.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach, Investigations Division by phone at (310) 521-3770 or email at [d11-smb-sector-lalb-investigations@uscg.mil](mailto:d11-smb-sector-lalb-investigations@uscg.mil).