



Collaborating for safety

Practical tools for cargo handling and stevedoring risks

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Regulatory expectations may appear straightforward on paper, however, in practice they can be challenging and, at times, confusing. Shipping Australia considers this to be the case for ship masters and crew seeking to align international arrangements with Australian regulatory requirements.

First-time callers to Australia face greater challenges, highlighting the need for clear, practical reference tools that simplify the technical requirements and reduce the risk of misunderstandings.

To address these challenges, Shipping Australia, in collaboration with industry representatives and regulators has initiated a structured project to transform Marine Orders 32 (MO32) and the Model Code of Practice: Managing risks in stevedoring into easy-to-follow guidance.

The aim is to help vessels improve their preparedness in line with these requirements before arrival at Australian ports, contributing to safer workplaces and helping support increased operational productivity by reducing ship turnaround time and the potential costs associated with non-compliance.

Scope of the project

In simple terms, MO32 prescribes Australian requirements for loading and unloading operations, and for the inspection, testing, and maintenance of machinery and equipment used for loading and unloading a vessel, which belongs to the vessel. This regime is administered by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

The Model Code of Practice: Managing risks in stevedoring explains how to carry out stevedoring work safely, with a focus on Work Health and Safety (WHS) for loading and unloading vessel cargo, handling cargo on the wharf, and moving

cargo in and out of the terminal. This regime is administered by SafeWork Australia.

As the two regimes sit in different legal and operational spaces, to avoid confusion and maintain clarity, stakeholders agreed to first focus exclusively on MO32, with the Model Code of Practice: Managing risks in stevedoring to be addressed in the second phase.

Who is at the table?

Following initial setup work in 2023 and continued engagement during 2024, the project collaboration expanded significantly in 2025. A joint industry-regulator network is now actively driving the project forward. The stakeholders involved include:

- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Safe Work Australia (SWA)
- Shipping lines and Agents
- Stevedores and terminal operators
- Marine surveyors
- Port service providers
- Shipping Australia policy and operational and legal groups members

From the First Working Group Meetings to a Structure Program of Workshops

Through working group meetings and structured workshops, the involvement of all stakeholders has been critical in bringing operational realities together with regulatory expectations through robust conversations. Stakeholders have shared insights ranging from deficiencies, gray areas, dimensional requirements, and protective fencing to access requirements, inspection processes, and non-compliance with

MO32 and the Model Code of Practice: Managing risks in stevedoring. As the shared goal is to stop unsafe loading and unloading activities and rectify non-compliance through collaborative effort, not to stop the ship or its trade.

Project deliverable tools

These ongoing contributions have now transitioned into the co-development of the first-ever MO32 Checklist and supporting guidance tools that clearly walk users through MO32 requirements, helping them understand and follow the legislation.

At this stage, the project aims to deliver user friendly tools through checklists, guidance material and pictorial representations.

Once published, these tools will be hosted online to ensure easy access and enable continuous updates based in response to regulatory changes and practical experience. This approach will allow target users, regardless of their global location, to access and understand Australian compliance requirements well in advance of arriving in Australia.

Recap

Such a complex, multi-stage initiative is time-consuming but ultimately worthwhile. Progress may be gradual, yet it is robust and enduring.

This ongoing collaborative project brings industry and regulators together with a shared objective: promoting safety, reducing vessel turnaround times and improving productivity.

Shipping Australia would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all stakeholders who are working collaboratively on this important initiative and supporting safer and more productive operations. ▲

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