

Clean Arctic Alliance comments on Viking Sky and Heavy Fuel Oil

By admin On March 27, 2019March 26, 2019 In Insurance Marine News, Keep, Marine Liability

In response to the news that cruise ship Viking Sky had reached safe harbour in Molde, Norway, Dr Sian Prior, Lead Advisor to the Clean Arctic Alliance said that “with a new season of cruise ships poised to enter Arctic waters, the Viking Sky crisis should serve as a wake-up call. Several factors helped avert disaster and ensured the safe return of passengers and crew to shore this weekend: the response and resolve of the Viking Sky’s crew, who restarted its engines under difficult conditions, the bravery and expertise of Norwegian helicopter teams and the crews of support vessels operating in difficult conditions to rescue Viking Sky passengers and the crew of the freighter Hagland Captain, along with the experience and resources of Norway’s authorities, and very importantly, the proximity of rescue infrastructure.”

“According to reports, the Norwegian Coastal Administration (Kystverket) has said that the Viking Sky was reported to be carrying 343 tonnes of HFO on board, along with 465 tonnes of diesel. The Viking Sky was in distress close to the Norwegian coast; the grounding of the vessels created a strong risk of an oil spill, which would have been devastating for the environment and local communities.”

“This summer, similar cruise ships carrying thousands of passengers will sail in Arctic waters and in other vulnerable regions, far from search and rescue facilities, including helicopters and tugs. It is not only the lives of the passengers and crew at stake, but also those involved in the response and rescue – which in remote Arctic locations is likely to include Indigenous and coastal communities with minimal or no equipment and training. In addition to the risk to lives, most of these vessels will be powered by oil-based fuels including heavy fuel oil (HFO), which pose a grave risk to the Arctic environment, and to the livelihoods of local Indigenous people. A spill of HFO is likely to take from months to years to be completely cleaned-up.”

“Norway has strongly backed the ending of HFO use and carriage in Arctic waters at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and has banned its use in national park waters around the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. With work on a ban on the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil from Arctic shipping currently under development by the IMO, now is the time for Arctic Cruise industry players to come clean on the fuels they are using, move away from HFO, and to sign up to the Arctic Commitment, which calls on businesses and

organisations to step forward and call for a phase-out of polluting HFO from Arctic shipping.”