

## Shipping needs to tackle misdeclared cargo in 2020, says freight forwarder

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International freight forwarder iContainers has warned that onboard fires caused by misdeclared cargo was a growing issue that needed to be addressed this year.

Klaus Lysdal, vice president of operations at iContainers, said that this was “an imperative problem” that needed to be tackled urgently, especially given the growing vessel sizes whose larger capacities increase the risks of having misdeclared cargo onboard.

The Barcelona, Spain-based forwarder said that part of the problem stemmed from misinformed shippers and inept practices.

“At this point, forwarders are still taking shippers’ word for what’s loaded in the container. But from a forwarder’s perspective, that tends to increase the risk that clients who are not well-versed in hazardous cargo and looking to ship it may come to forwarders,” Lysdal said, adding that “this puts the forwarder at risk, especially if the shippers’ paperwork is not in order.”

He said that a failure to tackle the problem before it deteriorated further could ultimately lead to regulations that could cause an increase in shipping costs.

Already this year a containership – the Cosco Pacific – has caught fire through what was said to have been the spontaneous combustion of a lithium battery cargo that had not been properly declared.

iContainers said that, while some carriers have reacted by imposing a large penalty for any detected misdeclarations “Some of the carriers’ initial steps to increase fines may help. But if this persists, it could result in mandatory manual inspections or similar moves to protect against these types of issues. Something like that would obviously lead to additional costs involved with shipping”.