

PRESS RELEASE

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Gibraltar's safety procedures for bunkering and ship-to-ship transfers are examples of industry best-practice

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is pleased to note that the Opposition are taking an interest in the Chief Minister's daily work; given their admitted confusion as to the utility of the Chief Minister's visit to the Port Authority to witness a ship-to-ship transfer of LNG, it seems that the Opposition have some lessons to learn on good leadership and governance.

The visit presented the opportunity for the Chief Minister to be briefed directly by the Deputy Captain of the Port and the Bunkering Superintendent, both of whom are trained in ship-to-ship LNG transfer, on the safety procedures of a ship-to-ship LNG transfer whilst a transfer was taking place. It thus presented a unique opportunity for the Chief Minister, accompanied by the Minister for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change and Minister for the Port, to personally witness the health and safety procedures in practice and to ask any questions that may arise. The Government considers the Opposition's concerns with such a visit to be both ironic and hypocritical considering that their supposed LNG 'experts' remain both nameless and faceless. Indeed, the Government is surprised at the Opposition's backlash to such an important public-interest meeting being conducted in a transparent and accountable manner in full view of Gibraltar's media.

The Government is similarly shocked at the low regard that the Opposition continuously shows it holds for the professionalism and competence of Gibraltar's emergency services and civil contingency authorities. As was explained to the Chief Minister during yesterday's visit, all ship-to-ship transfers are regulated by the Gibraltar Port Authority's code of practice, which incorporates all applicable international regulations and industry-recognised best practices. Furthermore, companies licenced by the Port Authority must prove that they have the necessary equipment, personnel and procedures in place to safely conduct each operation. The Opposition should be aware that Gibraltar's codes of practice for bunkering and ship-to-ship transfers are highly regarded as examples of industry best practice, and the Opposition may want to consider this before accusing the health and safety measures of Gibraltar's authorities of being sub-standard in any way.

In the unlikely scenario of an emergency on-board any of the vessels, standard practice across the merchant fleet is that it would first be controlled and dealt with by the vessel's crew who are fully trained in line with international regulations, know the unique features and layout of their ship and would be immediately on-scene. LNG carriers are also kitted out with the latest state-of-the-art firefighting equipment in order to prevent and fight any fire,



even though the risk of fire is already very low. Under international rules and conventions, the crew on-board vessels are required to perform regular drills and exercises to account for all possible emergencies.

The Port Authority's role in ship-to-ship transfers is to oversee and control every aspect of the operation, following a strict and stringent vetting process of vessels, vessel operators, past port state control history, and the characteristics of the cargo to be transferred. Finally, the transfer must be approved by the Bunkering Superintendent after he has been satisfied that all safety protocols have been met, and following a physical inspection on-board the vessels and confirmation that the weather conditions meet the minimum criteria for the operation to proceed safely. In the unlikely event of an incident the Port Authority would activate the Port Emergency Plan, which in turn would automatically initiate the civil contingency plan. The Port Authority would also deploy tugs with fire-fighting capability, initiate the Search and Rescue Plan and, when required, call-in all available seaborne resources to assist during any emergency situation.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC said, "I enjoyed going out yesterday, despite the roughish seas, to be briefed directly by the professionals on the regulations applicable to an Ship-to-Ship LNG transfer. I was, as usual, very impressed with the knowledge and professionalism of our Port Authority experts and the environmental team who took us out. From either of the safety or the environmental protection standpoint, the Ship-to-Ship operation is not something people should be at all concerned about."