
SHIPPING IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

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The impact of the coronavirus pandemic upon the international carriage of goods by sea is already being keenly felt.

Charter rates have generally plummeted across the board; many vessels sit idle; the price of oil has tumbled; parties are seeking to extricate themselves from commodity contracts which can either no longer be performed due to worker shortages or because of a dramatic slump in demand; and quarantine restrictions have caused significant delays to the shipment and delivery of goods around the world.

Inevitably these issues and others are giving rise to legal disputes and will continue to do so. Members of Essex Court Chambers are available to assist, and have already been called upon to advise owners, charterers and clubs.

Amongst many issues arising, two recurring themes at this early stage are:

- (1) [Laytime and off-hire questions](#) - [Mubarak Waseem](#) has produced a note considering some of the issues that arise in these contexts; and
- (2) [Safe port obligations](#) - [Freddie Popplewell](#) has produced an overview of some of the key legal principles that govern this area and the impact of the pandemic on the relevant obligations.

The shipping team at Essex Court is keeping abreast of these and other relevant issues. As matters develop, we will be updating Chambers website with further briefings.

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