

Cargo Company and Ship's Engineer Face California State Criminal Charges in Oil Spill

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In an important example of California state criminal environmental enforcement, the Los Angeles District Attorney charged chief engineer Konstantin Grudov of the *M/T Celine* with multiple offenses arising from an August 29, 2008 oil spill.

The charges included the following:

- Three counts of failure to follow specific fuel transfer procedures,
- One count of causing an oil spill into California marine waters,
- One count of discharge of oil into navigable waters,
- One count of discharge of bunker oil into California waters, and
- One count of discharge of a deleterious substance.

The Swiss company operating the ship, Enzian Ship Management Co., was also charged with the same offenses.

According to the indictment, Grudov allegedly ignored various fuel bunkering procedures during an early morning fuel transfer operation. The alleged negligence resulted in the release of bunker fuel on board the vessel, which then flowed overboard into the San Pedro Bay. The California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Coast Guard, and Port of Los Angeles police responded to the spill and were able to recover 223 gallons of oil from the water.

Arraignment is set for September 9, 2009 in Los Angeles Superior Court. If convicted Grudov could face up to five years in jail and \$675,000 in fines, while Enzian Ship Management Co. could face a penalty of an additional \$675,000.

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