

A Global Pandemic of High Catfines in Marine Fuel

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Between the 11th-31st August 2025, VPS, through its fuel quality testing service, witnessed a high number of elevated catfine levels in Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oils (VLSFO) across East Coast USA, Singapore, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Algeciras and Port Louis. This resulted in the release of seven VPS Bunker Alerts covering that time period.

Catfine levels ranged from 62ppm to 176ppm across the globe.

The high catfine levels across the East Coast USA, mainly Boston and New York, came from fuel delivered by a single supplier, with levels ranging from 70ppm-176ppm.

In Singapore, catfine levels ranged from 67ppm-156ppm, with fuel delivered from four suppliers.

Whilst in Algeciras, fuel from two suppliers ranged between 61ppm-92ppm. Three fuel suppliers in Rotterdam delivered fuel containing catfines between 61-78ppm and in Hamburg, two suppliers delivered fuel with catfine levels between 62ppm-66ppm.

Finally, Port Louis had three suppliers delivering fuel containing 63-65ppm catfines.

Elevated amounts of these highly abrasive particles cause accelerated wear of diesel engine components, such as piston rings, cylinder liners and fuel pumps, if not reduced to acceptable levels.

Ships receiving high Al+Si (catfines) fuels are recommended to take Fuel System Check samples to assess the fuel treatment efficiency and to know the fuel oil quality at the engine inlet. This will help in any subsequent assessment of increased engine wear and damages, and in resolving fuel quality disputes.

In addition, for lubricating oils it is recommended that PQ Index analysis is undertaken for cylinder scrape-down analysis, as any result above a reading of 50, would indicate abrasive wear, as would an iron reading above 200ppm.

VPS laboratories and regional offices span all time zones and can assist you with further commercial and technical advice if required.

For further clarifications email us at technical@vpsveritas.com or speak with your Account manager. More contact details at www.vpsveritas.com