



# Bunker Fuel Oil Quality

## Introduction

Over the years, bunker fuel has been seen as a convenient “dumping ground” for dirty oil and other chemical wastes, which were largely undetectable in the fuel.

While a narrative can be relatively simply made that a “vessel started having engine room problems only while consuming a fuel”, it can be very difficult to resolve whether any alleged engine or fuel handling equipment damage is due to the actual maintenance of the engine room and equipment, or the characteristics of the fuel in use at the time.

ISO 8217 is a complex specification for the quality of bunker fuel supplied to vessels. On the one hand it is a simple specification with regard to the required physical qualities of the fuel for use, but it also contains a general requirement that the fuel should be “suitable for use” – and that is not so easily defined. Forensic laboratory examination of samples can provide some insight into what may be causing problems in use.

Samples are key in trying to understand bunker issues. Although custody samples taken at the point of delivery are often the “legal” samples of representiveness, samples taken from vessel’s systems

represent what is happening “in use”. We always recommend that a suite of samples should be available from the various points of contention:

- Point of delivery (manifold drip)
- Storage tanks (do you have the same fuel here?)
- Transfer pump (what is coming from the storage tanks)
- Settling tank (what is the compatibility with previous bunkers?)
- Service tank (How well is the fuel purified?)
- Engine feed (What is being delivered to the engine at the time of any incident?)
- Sludge samples (ex strainers, purifiers, filters... What is the deposit? – only then can you have some idea of where it may have come from)

We have many years’ experience of dealing with ISO 8217 specification quality disputes, and can also provide engine room experience.

---

E: [info@apclimited.co.uk](mailto:info@apclimited.co.uk)

T: +44 (0)1444 412041

Suite 2, Lion House, Folders Lane East, Ditchling, East Sussex. BN6 8SG