

Prepared by: Commercial Office Approved by: Management Revision date: 2026-07-02

KNOWLEDGE CENTER · OPERATIONS

Marine Terminal Operations Overview

What actually happens between a tanker's nomination and its departure — and why disciplined terminals protect your laytime.

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Document Title	Marine Terminal Operations Overview
Document Number	CT3-KNW-003
Revision	Rev 1.0
Issue Date	12 July 2026
Category	Operations
Classification	Educational — public

Revision History

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	PREPARED	APPROVED
1.0	12 July 2026	Initial controlled issue.	Commercial Office	Management



Prepared by: Commercial Office Approved by: Management Revision date: 2026-07-02

To a chartering desk, a terminal is a line in a voyage estimate. To the vessel, it is a counterparty in one of the most procedurally controlled operations in commercial shipping. Understanding what happens at the berth — and why — helps cargo owners plan realistic laytime and read terminals' quality from their paperwork.

Before arrival: the call is won or lost early

A well-run vessel call starts days before lines go ashore. The terminal reviews the nomination: vessel particulars against berth limits (draft, length overall, displacement), vetting status, cargo documentation, and compatibility of ship and shore manifolds. The vessel receives terminal regulations and berth information; the terminal receives the ship's questionnaire. Surprises eliminated on paper are hours saved alongside.

The governing standard: ISGOTT

The International Safety Guide for Oil Tankers and Terminals — ISGOTT, jointly published by ICS and OCIMF, now in its sixth edition — is the reference that harmonizes how tankers and terminals work together. Its centerpiece is the **ship/shore safety checklist**: a joint declaration, completed and signed by both vessel and terminal before transfer, covering moorings, communications, firefighting readiness, closed operations, repeated checks during the operation, and agreed emergency shutdown procedures.

The checklist is not bureaucracy. It is the negotiated interface between two industrial facilities — one of which happens to float.

Cargo operations: controlled motion

Transfer proceeds at rates agreed in the pre-transfer conference, ramped up in stages. Both sides keep continuous watch: tank levels on ship and shore, manifold pressures, mooring tension as draft changes. Custody measurement brackets the operation — opening and closing gauges or meter readings, sampling at agreed points, usually witnessed by independent surveyors appointed by cargo interests.

Emergency shutdown (ESD) criteria are agreed in advance: who can stop the transfer, how the signal is given, and what valve-closure timing prevents pressure surge in the transfer system.

After the hoses: documentation

A vessel call generates a defined document set — and its promptness is a quality signal:

- **Statement of facts** — the timestamped narrative of the call, from arrival to departure.
- **Timesheets** — the laytime arithmetic that demurrage claims are built on.
- **Custody documents** — quantity reports, sample receipts, quality certificates.
- **Protests** — formal reservations by either side when something deviated.

Reading terminal quality from outside

Ask these questions of any marine terminal, and weigh the specificity of the answers:

- Are berth specifications published and current — or "available on request" and then vague?
- Is the ship/shore safety checklist completed jointly on every call, without exception?
- How quickly do statements of fact and custody documents follow completion?
- What was the terminal's role in the last incident or near-miss, and what changed afterwards?



Prepared by: Commercial Office Approved by: Management Revision date: 2026-07-02

Terminals that answer in documents rather than adjectives are the ones that protect your laytime.

Notice

This publication is educational material describing industry-standard practice. It is not an offer of services or a representation of specific terminal capabilities. © 2026 Crude Tankers III AS.

