

Infosheet No. 30 Modern ship size definitions

ULCC: Ultra Large Crude Carriers
300,000 - 550,000 tonnes deadweight.
Used for carrying crude oil on long haul routes from the Arabian Gulf to Europe, America and the Far East, via the Cape of Good Hope normally discharging at custom built terminals.

VLCC: Very Large Crude Carriers
200,000 - 299,999 tonnes deadweight.
On similar routes to ULCCs but with greater flexibility in discharging port options owing to their smaller size, and for this reason also employed ex Mediterranean, West African and even North Sea Terminals. They can be ballasted through the Suez Canal.

AFRAMAX: A tanker of maximum 79,999 tonnes deadweight, or the largest tanker size in the Average Freight Rate Assessment Scale.

MALACCAMAX: The maximum hull form using the maximum draught permissible to pass through the Strait of Malacca, Malaysia.

HANDYSIZE BULKERS: Up to 50,000 tonnes deadweight. This allows the ships to enter smaller ports around the world and to pick up smaller cargoes.

MINIBULKERS:
Less than 10,000 tonnes deadweight.
Mainly employed in the coastal and short sea trade.

PANAMAX: The largest acceptable size in order to transit the Panama Canal. Ships' lengths are restricted to 275m, and maximum permitted width is slightly more than 32m. Average deadweight of such a ship is about 65,000 to 80,000 tonnes, cargo intake usually restricted to approximately 52,500 tonnes on the Panama Canal draft.

SUEZMAX: Before its closure in 1967 the Suez Canal could only cope with 80,000 tonne deadweight tankers, though larger vessels could go through in ballast, and the maximum draft available was 37 feet. An enlargement to enable the canal to take 200,000 ton tankers was proposed.

CAPE SIZE: 100 - 180,000 tonnes deadweight, draft approx. 17m. To govern the design of large ships built to serve deepwater terminals handling raw materials, such as iron ore, from Brazil. Too big for the Panama or Suez canals, Capesize vessels voyage via Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope.

HANDYMAX BULKERS:
35 -50,000 tonnes deadweight.
This allows for each category to increase in size and some now consider the larger size in this Range as the Handymax.

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