technology

Chinese yard to install FORS

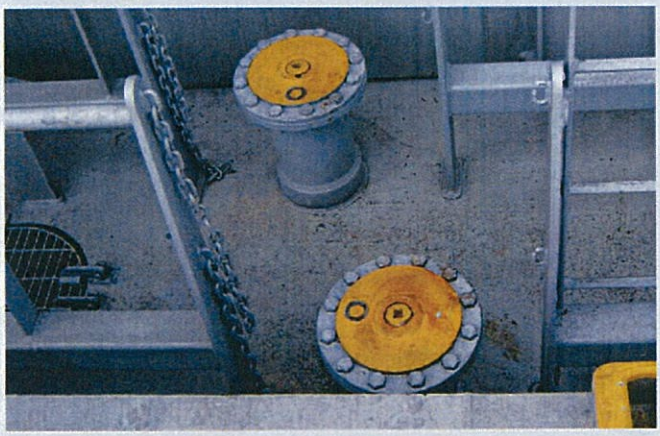
In a safety first, a bulk carrier newbuilding will be fitted with a Fast Oil Recovery System by Louis Dreyfus Armateurs

Louis Dreyfus Armateurs (LDA) is to install Fast Oil Recovery System (FORS) on eight bulk carriers being built at Tianjin Xingang Shipbuilding, the first Chinese yard to fit such equipment.

The system will be supplied by JLMD Ecologic of France whose systems received class approval from Bureau Veritas last year. BV offers a FORS class notation to suitably-equipped ships.

Gilles Longuève, general manager of JLMD Ecologic, is also president of the Maritime Passive Safety Association (MPSA), which exists to encourage "the shipping industry to be safer and more sustainable and helping avoiding oil spills", its website notes.

Nicolas Serres, a spokesman for the MPSA, hailed the LDA contract as marking "a major step for... the maritime passive safety industry's development" (see box). It shows that "lines are moving, with more worldwide players getting aware of eco safety", he told *Fairplay* last week, using "existing green solutions to cope with the growing concern about accidental pollution."



Ships equipped with FORS have pipework allowing easy access to fuel or cargo tanks [Photo: JLMD Ecologic]

The JLMD Ecologic system has inlet and outlet pipes positioned so that a ship's oil, whether fuel or cargo – it was first developed for tankers – can be removed quickly and simply in the event of a grounding, without having to pierce the hull.

"For ships in distress or having suffered an accident, this type of access makes the recovery of pollutants considerably faster and therefore helps to avoid oil spills," said the MPSA in a statement to coincide with the LDA order.

'A minor investment'

According to a reference list on the equipment manufacturer's website, this Chinese installation will be the first on bulk carrier newbuildings, although it has been retrofitted on two existing LDA bulk carriers. LDA expects these latest vessels to be delivered in 2013 and 2014.

Serres estimates the installation will cost about €110,000 for the lead ship, but said this "represents a very marginal part of the ship's overall cost".

So he describes the sum as "a minor investment compared with the benefits procured by avoiding the extremely direct high costs resulting from an incident or accident turning in oil spill".

The MPSA believes the order "highlights the growing interest shown by the big players in shipping for passive maritime safety technologies". The topic was recently aired at the IMO, where such technologies and services were included in discussions about maritime transport in polar regions. F

Taking action on passive safety

Passive safety is "a new state of mind", according to the Maritime Passive Safety Association (MPSA). Its website urges the shipping industry to "break with the zero-risk pretension" and make ships "ready to protect the marine environment in case of an accident at sea".

Its stance is that active safety systems, such as radars, embedded computing systems and automatic pilots, are intended to prevent accidents happening. But when something does go wrong, they offer no help. "The actors of the shipping industry still have very little culture of crisis preparedness and do not anticipate the environmental management of an accident at sea," the association argues.

So its mission is to encourage owners to install hardware – specifically, pipework that gives access to fuel and cargo tanks – that can be accessed in an emergency to remove oil from a disabled ship.