

Dealing with engine room fires: Swedish Club



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Swedish Club has received 28 reports concerning engine room fires over the past 10 years. When compared with other Hull and Machinery (H&M) claims the frequency of engine room fires was low, but the average cost when they did occur was among the highest – averaging \$1.85m per occurrence – compared with \$320,000 for H&M claims in general



Peter Stålberg, senior technical adviser at Swedish Club, said that engine rooms on ships contained all the ingredients for a fire: oxygen; heat and flammable liquids under pressure. “Not surprisingly, one of the dominating causes is lube-oil or fuel-oil mist spraying onto hot surfaces and then igniting”, Stålberg said

Although all vessels today are required to have double containment piping (jacketing) for high pressure oil piping and at new build the insulation of the exhaust pipe system – including the turbo-chargers – is normally in good condition, over time the insulation will deteriorate. “An exhaust pipe system insulated to 95% is not good enough – it must be 100% intact – always”, he said.

“In one case I was involved with,” said Stålberg, “even though the exhaust gas pipes on the vessel were insulated with thick blankets of insulation and covered with metal sheets, spraying oil from a sheared hydraulic oil pipe, which found its way to the hot exhaust gas pipe under the insulation, through the crevices and ignited. Quick action by the crew controlled the fire and minimized the damage.

He noted that a swift and effective response within a few minutes could limit the damage to soot washing and less than \$200,000 in costs. Yet Stålberg said that he had seen cases where delaying the response or failing to operate the fire extinguishing system properly, had allowed the fire to intensify and spread, causing severe damage and cost in excess of \$3m.

https://www.swedishclub.com/media_upload/files/Publications/Loss%20Prevention/ENGRoomFires-v4-Web.pdf

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