

POWERED BY
BNET.com

[FindArticles](#) > [E: The Environmental Magazine](#) > [May-June, 2003](#) > [Article](#) > [Print friendly](#)

Ship recycling: a cleaner, greener way to scrap large boats - Currents

Michael de Laine

Scrapping or breaking up ships is a labor-intensive business that for cost reasons is often carried out in Asia with little or no regard for the environment or worker safety. But that will change if the growing field of "green shipbreaking" bears fruit.

According to a report issued by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2000, 700 old ships end their lives every year on beaches in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Vietnam and other Asian countries, where there are few environmental or worker protection laws. The Asian shipbreakers have largely ousted Europeans from the market--the competition is too tough.

A report prepared for the Danish Environmental Protection Agency (DEPA) by the consulting engineers Cowi found that environmentally defensible shipbreaking occurs at only a few locations in Europe and the 30 market-oriented countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

According to DEPA's Lone Schou, European Union (EU) rules prohibit selling ships to Asian countries as waste, but that owners get around this by selling them to non-EU countries before they reach the end of their lives.

Old ships are an environmental hazard. Their iron hulls are painted using anti-fouling additive tributyltin (TBT), which is toxic to the aquatic environment, mammals and humans. Hulls and holds contain remnants of mercury, asbestos, electrical cables, oil and fuel.

"As far as I can see, hazardous waste is not removed from any of the ships before they're sent to Asia to be broken up," says Frank Stuer-Lauridsen, a Cowi biologist.

Jacob Hartmann of Greenpeace Denmark points out that green ship-breaking may soon become a priority, because single-hull ships, which are prone to spilling their cargo, will not be able to sail internationally after 2016 and must be broken up.

Ethical owners may soon have the best of both worlds when breaking ships, however. Maritime Logistics, located at Sandefjord in Norway, is currently negotiating with different sources to set up operations this year in Asia, probably in the Bengal region of India and Bangladesh.

"We will use local labor wearing protective suits to scrap ships in an environmentally defensible way," says Gunnar Nielsen, a Maritime Logistics partner with more than 20 years of maritime management experience. "The ships will be emptied of asbestos, oil and other environmentally hazardous products before they are cut up. We expect the market for 'green' shipbreaking to grow and to stay competitive." CONTACT: Maritime Logistics, (011)47-33-29-32-90, www.maritimelogistics.no.

COPYRIGHT 2003 Earth Action Network, Inc.

COPYRIGHT 2003 Gale Group