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by [Joseph Fonseca](#)

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Viswa Lab reveals several peculiarities that lead to marine claims being wrongly settled

Revelations by Houston based Viswa Lab has made insurance companies and P & I Clubs sit up and try to get their act together. In cases of machinery breakdown, deterioration of machinery performance and other losses suffered due to malfunctioning there has been a tendency to traditionally lay false claims by misdirecting blame. Consequently, findings made by Viswa Lab are likely to have far reaching consequences on the way marine insurance claims are dealt with.

Speaking on the sidelines of the seminar “LSF and MGO changing over procedure – challenges and good practices” held at the Anglo Eastern Training Centre in Mumbai last week, Dr. R. Vis, Director of Viswa Lab gave details about various findings made by his Lab that are likely to bring about a paradigm shift in settling of claims. Following a global demand, Viswa Lab which began as a service provider operating from Houston, Antwerp and Singapore have expanded their capabilities into providing consultancy on efficient running of diesel engines and optimizing fuel consumption.

He explained the practical day to day problems ship staff faced with regards to failure to machinery parts. “Unfortunately, in our marine industry they don’t really try to establish the root cause of a failure,” he said. “It is easy for them to say the ‘engineers’ overloaded engine’. (That is they did not maneuver the engine properly). So the blame goes to the engineer. In the failure analysis of the engine we did over the past 20 years it revealed that in 80% of the cases something was wrong with either the material, the design, heat treatment, manufacturing process, welding etc. and only 20 per cent of the case could be assigned to human error. Now human error gets 100 percent of the blame in the report because the insurance covers human error. They immediately get the insurance money. But the fellow who has done the fault is the manufacturer.”

Now more and more companies are turning to Viswa Lab to identify the faults and reason for breakdown. Recently ABB - the turbochargers, sent them a broken blade saying that every 100,000 hours the entire blade had to be changed. They wanted to know why this happened. Vishwa made a very interesting study and found that the material got deteriorated and this deterioration took place at the micro level viz. at the grain level. They wondered why they did not supply a material which could prevent it. On visiting their designer they learnt that if they

used that material it would cost them three times as much and so it is much cheaper to run it for 100,000 hours and change the turbo charger.

“This is what is called is ‘designed to fail’ like a ship is scrapped after say 25 years,” explains Dr Vis. “Hence when the fault lies with the manufacturers it is wrong to mention that the ‘engine is overloaded’ by the ship staff. This has opened the eyes of the P & I Clubs, insurance companies, etc. So insurance companies after paying the ship have now been going after the manufacturers saying ‘It is your fault! See this report’. Another of our exciting findings after getting to the root cause has helped to reveal the condition of the machinery. As a result one can anticipate failure well before the break down happens.”

Comments



Ron Oyer

Good points. As time is of the essence in the maritime world, many owners do not take the time to properly investigate machinery casualties.

1/12/2011 8:19:49 AM

Alexander Milenkov

Really good points. But why the ship managers / owners should care if they could get the money from the underwriters? They have the claim, they use what the insurers provide, there is nothing wrong. No wrong statement, no risk of misleading or wrong intention.

Here the difficult point is with the underwriters to find the way not to pay, or as mentioned by Dr Vis, "... insurance companies after paying the ship have now been going after the manufacturers saying ‘It is your fault! See this report.’".

I wonder how they can go to the manufacturer and say:

"Do you know that your part failed and now you have to compensate the ship owner?"

The question remains what will happen with the guarantee (for the failed part) clause? Shall it be for life? Even if any such investigation succeeds the manufacturers have limited responsibility, usually to the cost of the equipment and within the guarantee period mainly or better say "only". Good makers when find design fault replace parts on their account.

I recall a case 1-2 years ago with Japanese engine and turbine maker replacing the entire air inlet casing for ME turbines. Anyhow, how many are like them?

Above is just an opinion. I always appreciate Dr Vis professional approach and expertise.

1/13/2011 2:54:16 PM