

**GEORGE A.GRATSOS SPEECH DURING NTUA WORKSHOP ON
MARINE OIL POLLUTION (9/6/06)**

Thank you for inviting me to address this workshop on Marine Oil Pollution Control. The subject is very topical in shipping circles but it must be considered in its correct context.

Shipping generates less than 20% of the world's oil pollution, the rest is shore based. Logic would have it that we should be more concerned with the larger rather than the smaller percentage. Unfortunately this isn't so.

Ships are strangers to most ports they call. They do not vote. They are therefore easy prey to vote hungry politicians. Therefore ships, the lesser polluters, will always be the targets. Land based pollution initiatives are rarely enforced with any fervour even though they are easy to implement and police. For example reception facilities for ship oily waste are not always available.

Ship generated pollution would be less if we consumed oil less profligately. This, because less oil would have to be transported. Therefore even some of the ship generated pollution could be eliminated if we changed our habits.

Ship generated pollution is either from operational spills, accidental spills or maritime accidents.

Doubtless crew training is very important.

On the other hand it is easy to blame the crew for various forms of pollution, but many instances of ship generated pollution could have been reduced by better design and construction of the ship and its equipment. With ever larger ships and pumping equipment of greater capacity many measures considered heretofore adequate should be revisited.

In a zero tolerance environment for ship generated pollution the ship's structure should be of robust construction and not be prone to generating cracks or other defects.

Furthermore most well know pollution incidents occur close to land. There must be some significance to this. Are ports and their approaches well charted? Do port states have ports of refuge available? Are their pilotage, salvage and pollution limitation services effective? Do they have effective accident co-ordination centres?

Ships rely on effective shore based support and they should get it.

Concluding ship generated pollution is minimal compared to the volume of oil transported. It is no more than a drop or two of gasoline spilled every time you fill your car's gas tank.

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We have come a long way from the poor performance of the past but in order to go forward and reduce marine oil pollution further, we must refocus on the bigger culprits.

With these few thoughts I would urge you to address oil pollution in a holistic way and wish you constructive deliberations.

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