

International Salvage Union cleans up

Members of the International Salvage Union (ISU) recovered nearly one million of potential pollutants during salvage operations last year. During 2002, emergency assistance was provided worldwide for 268 vessels with cargoes and bunkers threatening pollution, as against 247 ships in 2001, says the organisation in its annual market review.

The results of the latest ISU's latest Pollution Prevention Survey show that oils, chemicals, other pollutants and bunker fuel recovered last year totalled 957,122 tonnes, as against 539,073 tonnes in 2001. This amounts to an increase of 77.5%. ISU president Joop Timmermans says: "ISU salvors have recovered over 10.4m tonnes of potential pollutants in the nine years to end-2002. This increase in total pollutant recovery is a sharp contrast to the pattern which emerged in the three years 1999-2001, when recoveries were running at around 500,000 tonnes.

"This reflected the absence of VLCCs and ULCCs in the casualty workload. In the case of 2002, however, a single large tanker casualty resulted in a significant increase in the total oil recovery figure.

"There was also a substantial increase in the recovery of 'other pollutants', such as diesel oil, aviation fuel and slops".

Last year there was a modest increase of 8.5% in the number of casualties., yet we saw a 77.5% increase in the amount of potential pollutants salvaged, said Mr Timmermans. "The now relatively rare case of a large tanker provides the explanation for much of this increase. At the same time, there was a dramatic 86% fall in the tonnage of chemicals salvaged, while, in contrast, the amount of bunkers salvaged rose by just over 11%."

The major change in 2002, however, was in the other pollutants category, which increase nearly four times on the 2001 figure, says the ISU.

The ISU's Pollution Prevention Survey began in 1994. In the nine years to end-2002, ISU salvors recovered 10,402,247 tonnes of potential pollutants. This total consists of 8,615,298 tonnes of crude oil; 563,040 tonnes of chemicals, and 649,198 tonnes of 'other pollutants' (recorded as a separate category for the first time in 1997).

During 2002 there was a sharp rise in the number of tanker salvage operations - 39, as against 19 in 2001. The single VLCC (NAME TO COME) was carrying 240,000 tonnes of crude oil. This case accounts for nearly 60% of the increase in potential pollutants salvaged.

This vessel became disabled in Chinese waters during severe weather and salvaged by a locally-based ISU member who towed the tanker to a sheltered location and carried out a ship-to-ship transfer of the entire cargo. The tanker was then towed a repair port.

Last year also saw another substantial increase in the number of casualties - tanker and other vessels - requiring ship-to-ship transfer services of cargoes and bunkers. The total rose from 15 cases in 2001 to 35 in 2002.

Lloyd's Forum continues to be the most regularly used form of salvage contract. Just under 35% of the services in 2002 involved LOF - a proportion little changed on 2000 or 2001, says the ISU.