

Get on board with GSR

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An interview with Henning Gramann, CEO, Green Ship Recycling Services GmbH



Green Ship Recycling Services GmbH (GSR) offers comprehensive guidance to the international ship recycling industry, with an emphasis on enhancing the safety and environmental performance of the industry. The company's experience has been accumulated through years of R&D, participation in technical and legal forums, understanding of clients' demands and open exchanges with all stakeholders. Typical services include Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM), preparations for ships and compliance projects for recyclers.

Henning Gramann, CEO of GSR Services, has worked in ship recycling for 10 years. His insight spans a ship's lifecycle from cradle to grave and he's an internationally respected maritime expert. He's also guest professor at the World Maritime University and Chairman of IHM-Association.

How was GSR initially established?

Henning Gramann: In 2000 I began a career as an environmental engineer, specialising in waste management at an institute for safety and environmental protection in shipping. I went to sea as an environmental officer on board a cruise vessel in 2003 and began work at classification society, Germanischer Lloyd (GL) in 2005. At GL I was the first to look into ship recycling and built up a dedicated department. At that time I also participated in IMO meetings where the Hong Kong Convention (HKC) and related guidelines were being developed on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Transport and Digital Infrastructure. I was directly involved in R&D and the preparation of submissions. In parallel I developed solutions for problems the industry was not aware of at that time.

In 2010 I decided to start with my own company as I believed that the biggest need for support was in the developing countries where ship recycling takes place and the focus of GL was merely on shipbuilders and owners. Finally in January 2011 I opened my business for supporting the shipping industry and ship recyclers for their compliance with HKC.

Please outline the services GSR provide throughout South Asia.

HG: Besides preparations of IHM onboard ships on the Indian Subcontinent we're very active in supporting ship recyclers for full compliance with HKC. We had started with a detailed gap analysis in 2012 and in 2014 we started the first HKC-projects in India with four recycling facilities. Since then seven have received a Statement of Compliance from ClassNK after detailed and lengthy audits.

I think it is worth looking further into these projects as they provide a role model for many more recyclers, in addition to the 12 in India we're currently working for. First of all, we had analysed the requirements of HKC and challenges for compliance of the four known ship recycling methods (beaching, landing, alongside, dry-dock). Our conclusion was that all work happens in or above water except for dry-docks, which offer a better containment. All other aspects relate solely to awareness, training and management. Still we see a lot of criticism of the 'beaching' method, but all of this doesn't distinguish between good and bad management or take into consideration that a well managed basic facility can be much safer and environmentally sound than a perfectly equipped facility with unaware workers and management. The bad reputation of beaching method comes from poor working conditions some years ago, but it's not the cause of the problems.

We work with the recyclers on all aspects of their daily activities including organisation, roles and responsibilities, trainings for different workers and management, layouts and equipment of facility, safety measures and awareness, monitoring, maintenance, labelling of hazards, work planning, reporting, and much more. Basically we're reorganising the ship recycling facilities wherever needed and maintain good practice when compliant. That means we concentrate on individual preferences – those that are best for each facility – and not simply look to apply standardised solutions.



What separates you from your competitors?

HG: First it is our experience – 10 years of work exclusively in the field of HKC-compliance. The insight in legal developments and knowing HKC and guidelines precisely, plus the related R&D is an advantage that most don't have. This covers all aspects of a ship's lifecycle, from manufacturers and suppliers via shipbuilders, shipowners and finally via the recyclers to downstream waste management. For all of them we offer specific services like no one else does. Also, over the years GSR has gained so much insight and we've had many open exchanges with all stakeholders that we believe we have a proper understanding of the entire industry with regards to HKC. Additionally, we're not just considering legal compliance, but also efficiency, processes and productivity.

Our work is based on fairness, cooperation and openness. We want to trust and be trusted. First comes quality, then business. I believe that quality and honesty will survive, not quick and convenient impractical solutions. GSR is regarded as a very reputable key player in the field of HKC and that is what I like.

There are many safety and environmental stipulations that need to be adhered to in the ship recycling industry. How do you ensure this happens?

HG: First we raise awareness and understanding. Our clients want to become

compliant, they are not just working for just another certificate on the wall. They want changes in their companies to attract good and responsible ship owners. As the 'green' demands gain further traction, this also becomes another business aspect. All our clients from the ship recycling sector are proud of what they have achieved, their doors are open and they want people to see how much the industry is developing.

As a consultant I can't guarantee that my current and previous clients maintain full compliance at any time, but I'm confident that our clients do their utmost to be compliant and that they see certification as a starting point, not the finish.

How do you see the recycling industry evolving as the salvageable materials become more hi-tech?

HG: Currently the recycling in Asia is highly efficient. Due to the cheap labour many materials are segregated very carefully and also more materials are re-used than recycled or disposed of as they tend to be in more developed recycling countries, such as China and Turkey.

No doubt ships get more complex and contain more electronics. Here I see a large potential for recovery of highly valuable materials in electronics, including rare earths and far better technology exists in developed countries than on the Asian Subcontinent for achieving this. Also the use of composite materials creates new problems for material recycling as we are already seeing in Europe with the wind turbine blades. It would be interesting to make a life-cycle assessment of these materials to see whether or not they are the better choice in the end.



What are the most pressing issues for GSR?

HG: We're looking at the current IHM demand, which is practically non-existent. Until 2020 all EU-flagged and EU-visiting ships, regardless of the flag, need to have a certified IHM on-board. That means nearly 30,000 IHMs are to be developed within the coming four years. The quality of IHMs is important as well, as it's a technical file and used for planning of safe and sound recycling. Due to the huge upcoming demand it is necessary to provide sufficient capacities for ensuring quality IHMs. Therefore I've established the International HazMat Association (IHMA) where the 'good guys' form an international network for serving shipowners demand and avoiding low quality IHMs. Again, it's not all about the certificate, here we talk about responsibilities and prevention of risks for shipowners. Due to the continuing problem with asbestos, which is also still in new ships, we have to avoid loss of asset values by also inspecting the new deliveries. That is work coming on top of the huge demand expected over the coming years.

GSR is also developing technical solutions for reducing risks and environmental impacts of ship recycling. We have three innovations at hand and want to extend this further for becoming a one-stop-shop for recyclers.

Further information

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