



PRESS RELEASE

Over the last twenty years a number of ships have been lost without trace possibly as a result of structural failure or are known to have suffered structural failure and have subsequently sunk. Two of the most recent high profile cases of structural failure have been the tankers Erika and Prestige. The report into the loss of the latter by the Bahamas Maritime Authority made a number of recommendations concerning the survey, inspection and repair of tankers. These recommendations are now the basis for a new European Commission funded study.

The two year project, 'Assessment of Life-cycle Effect of Repairs on Tankers' (ALERT), started on 1st. November 2006. It will examine the cumulative effect of repairing a tanker throughout its life looking for present best industry practice and ways in which that practice can be improved. What is the effect of joining new steel to old steel? What additional stresses are put into a ship's structure during a repair? Is fatigue in the structure affected when part of the structure is replaced? How can any adverse effects of repairs be detected and minimised? These and other related subjects will be considered by the consortium of European partners plus the Bahamas Maritime Authority. The project will be coordinated by Newcastle University, with technical coordination by the University of Strathclyde and includes owners, a classification society and a ship repair yard.

At a preliminary meeting of the partners and the European Commission held in Newcastle on 15 November, the detailed plans were agreed. The consensus of the meeting was that it was an exciting project and that the results of the project are highly anticipated by all actors in the industry and policy makers and aims to suggest significant improvements in ship safety.