

Owners Seek Extra Fuel Protection

Fuel testing company Lintec Testing Services said it has had a massive response to its revolutionary new service to screen bunkers for chemical contamination. Over 300 vessels have signed up for Lintec's extra level of protection since it was launched at the end of October last year.

Lintec developed the routine forensic screening methodology after a series of extraordinary bunker contamination incidents in 2004.

"Bunker testing requirements have been pushed to the limit over the past year with some bunker fuels causing a shock to shipowners by inflicting engine damage while still meeting ISO 8217 parameters," says John Dixon, Lintec managing director.

The most high profile example was in May last year, when traces of dry cleaning solvents, such as trichloroethylene, found their way into the fuel bunkered at the port of Fujairah. This resulted in engine damage to several ships that used the fuel.

"The use of forensic techniques successfully proved the presence of trichloroethylene and other contaminants in the Fujairah fuel. As a consequence of this analysis several owners de-bunkered the fuel in question and were able to make a successful claim against the fuel suppliers," Dixon says. Lintec has established base levels for naturally occurring chemicals and solvent contaminants in fuels and developed guidelines that show if fuels are adulterated deliberately or if trace elements have found their way into the fuel accidentally. This methodology, combined with modern technology, is the basis for the new service.

"It is Lintec's view that any contaminants in fuels are undesirable. For shipowners and charterers it is a question of weighing up the risks, but at Lintec we believe that a 'better safe than sorry approach' makes a lot of sense. Nevertheless, we are very careful at what point to issue an alert in order to avoid needlessly scaring our customers." Dixon adds

