



Bulletin 25 - 11/97 - Steel Scrap (Oxidation) - Ex N. Europe

At the present time one of our members has a 40 year old Second Officer lying in hospital with brain damage from which it appears he will not recover.

Scrap steel looks harmless but it is not!

The problem of oxidation of steel scrap and lack of oxygen is thought to be well known within the industry having resulted in many fatalities in the past. That this has happened recently to an experienced deck officer is worrying.

The cargo described as HMS 1/2 consisted mainly of shredded cars which was loaded in Sweden and Germany for discharge in Turkey. The ship had carried the same cargo on several previous voyages, with no apparent problems.

The second officer had been requested to take photographs of the stowage. The hatch covers had been opened and after 45 mins the second officer descended into the hold.

After a matter of minutes the second officer collapsed, luckily a seaman supporting the second officer from the weather deck, saw him collapse. He advised a colleague and together they both proceeded into the hold to rescue him. On entering the hold the two seamen reportedly became faint but luckily were able to climb out of the hatch unaided.

The unconscious second officer was later recovered by men in breathing apparatus. He is now lying in hospital with "loss of power in all extremities" it is likely that he will remain in this condition for the rest of his life.

This is a tragic case which could have turned out even worse by the misguided bravery of the second officer's colleagues.

It would appear members/the industry must not naturally assume that the dangers of this type of cargo are known to all.

These tragic accidents are still occurring!

Source of information: Ursula Elsden F6