

Reducing marine pollution

Boud Van Rompay was born in 1949 in Koningshooikt, a small town near Antwerp, Belgium. During his time at University Boud was introduced to cave diving and developed a lifelong love affair with the water. His diving activities rapidly led to an introduction to the world of commercial diving. In 1974, Boud founded Hydrex NV, which has since grown to the international company it is today.



A CUSTOMISED SERVICE FOR UNDERWATER INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR



Q Can you give a breakdown of your business and explain how it has changed over the years?

Hydrex offers high-speed turnkey underwater inspection, repair and maintenance services to shipowners wherever and whenever they are needed. Upon the first call, we promptly inform the customer about the feasibility of a particular underwater repair solution. That is the first step of the process which is then followed by a rapid mobilisation of a diver/technician team that will carry out the job and keep the ship in business. Hydrex has a long track record of performing complex permanent underwater repairs to thrusters, propellers, rudders, stern tube seals and damaged or corroded hulls. By creating drydock-like conditions around the affected area, our diver/technicians can carry out these operations in port or at anchor. All the projects we undertake are engineered and carried out in close cooperation with the customer and any third party suppliers, relieving the customer of all the hassle of coordination, planning and supervision.

All through our existence we invested in the research necessary to continue to evolve repair techniques and procedures. This allowed us to vastly expand the range of underwater repair services we can offer. Both our flexible mobdock (mobile mini drydock) and propeller straightening techniques have been updated regularly the last few years, enabling us to carry out repairs to almost any underwater part of a vessel.

Another important change has been the opening of several strategically placed offices. All these offices have fully operational fast response centres where an extensive range of state-of-the-art equipment is available at all times for a rapid mobilisation to any location around the world.

Ship Repair & Maintenance 50%
Offshore 50%

Q Are you actively targeting the offshore market?

Yes. In the last year we have carried out several large offshore maintenance and repair operations, among which the underwater removal and reinstallation of one of the azimuth thrusters of the heavy-fit semi-sub crane vessel Saipem 7000 in Cartagena and the full inspection and removal of all fouling from three drill ships in the Gulf of Mexico owned by Transocean, the world's largest offshore drilling company.

Q How has changing legislation and "the need to be green" affected your business?

We developed Ecospeed, an environmentally safe underwater hull coating system. Ecospeed offers a biocide-free solution for the protection of the underwater hull. In 2008, stringent tests were carried out within the framework of an EU-LIFE demonstration project to provide scientific data and to authenticate the non-toxicity of the Ecospeed hull performance technology. This research proved that the coating is 100% toxin-free and that there is no negative effect on the water quality or the marine environment at any point of its application or use. Ecospeed improves a ship's performance and provides it with long-term protection. This offers tremendous fuel savings to shipowners and leads to a reduction of the carbon footprint of their vessel, adding even further to the coating's ecological benefits.

Q Where do you have offices around the world?

We are headquartered in the Belgian port of Antwerp and we have offices in Tampa (U.S.A), Algeciras (Spain), Mumbai and Visakhapatnam (India), Port Gentil (Gabon) and Vancouver (Canada).

Q How do you see the future for Hydrex?

There is a growing demand for cost-effective localised services. This is exactly what Hydrex can offer to its customers with the combination of our worldwide network of offices and service stations and the full range of on-site underwater repairs that our teams can perform in a very short time frame.

As biocide based antifouling paints become increasingly regulated and legislated against, there is a growing need for a non-toxic hull coating system which is environmentally safe, economically viable and very effective. We have this system in Ecospeed and there will be more and more hulls coated with Ecospeed and routinely inspected and cleaned. This will provide additional work for drydocks as more and more ships are grit blasted and coated with Ecospeed to replace existing coatings.

Q What do you think makes Hydrex stand out from its competitors?

We can offer a complete and very fast service without any loss of quality. We begin with evaluating the feasibility of an underwater repair, continue through design and construction of customised equipment and go all the way through to successful execution of the repair or replacement

and subsequent follow-up. We take on, organise and execute the entire job, start to finish, relieving the customer of all the hassle of coordination, planning and supervision. All Hydrex diver/technicians are trained and qualified to perform the full range of required class-approved repair procedures in even the harshest conditions. We have found that an effective, competent team is the only way to consistently achieve a high quality result in the short periods of time usually available to ships with a tight schedule to maintain.

The company was founded with the sole purpose of reducing marine pollution. All of our operations contribute to this. Ecospeed in particular helps shipowners/operators reduce fuel consumption by 20% or more with consequent reduction in GHG and other harmful atmospheric pollutants. This means that we are providing an environmentally benign solution.

Q What would be your advice to shipowners in the current economic climate?

Let Hydrex take care of the underwater part of your vessel. We can be your eyes underwater and inform you of the condition of the underwater hull of the ship. By carrying out timely maintenance and performing any required repair work on site Hydrex can keep unexpected drydock visits at the absolute minimum, saving a lot of money for shipowners. Our underwater hull coating system, Ecospeed, is designed for regular maintenance. The coating also has a very strong resistance against mechanical impact and will protect your vessel's underwater hull much better than regular paint systems, even further increasing the financial benefits that Hydrex can offer shipowners.