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SKF automatic lubrication proving popular in supply ship applications

Automatic lubrication boosts safety and prolongs the service life of marine wire rope.

Gothenburg, Sweden, 12 September, 2019: The harsh environments experienced by supply ships and their limited down-time between jobs means that maintenance of standard components, such as wire rope, is both essential and challenging. The SKF automatic lubrication solution for wire rope is proving popular with Thor Ltd, a leading operator of support vessels for the oil, gas and pipelaying sector, where it is being used across their global fleet, as it promotes safety as well as profitability.

The loads that supply ships transport are frequently heavy, making thorough care of winches crucial. At regular intervals, the crew must lubricate the steel cable to reduce friction and minimise wear. Frequent lubrication is important, as the fleet often has a full schedule and cannot afford downtime. This is especially challenging in the harsh environmental conditions under which vessels often have to operate.

The wire rope lubricator (WRL), launched by SKF in 2016, has been reducing downtime and prolonging service on many fleets. It eliminates manual lubrication and is available in a range of models for use with any wire rope up to 52mm in size. It is designed to deliver highly effective lubrication in virtually any application using wire rope, including oil and gas rigs, wharf and ship cranes, deck winches, ship hoists, remotely operated vehicles and winding machines in mines. The WRL can also significant increase of the steel wire rope lifetime compared with wire rope lubricated conventionally.

In the case of Thor Ltd. the company has already installed automatic lubrication on five of its eleven ships that are often working for weeks at a time servicing locations ranging from Angola to Greenland. Lubrication was previously applied by hand, sometimes to ropes that are several hundred meters in length. The automatic system can easily be operated by every crew member from a knuckleboom crane (as in the Thor Ltd. case) or winch, which significantly reduces potential risks to crew members, while increasing the lifespan of each wire rope.

Supporting all lubricants typically used with wire rope, the WRL ensures optimum lubrication by applying the exact amount of grease required. The system distributes grease across the surface of each rope and forces it deep into the rope's core ensuring every strand is evenly coated. This reduces friction and heat generation, while protecting against corrosion. In addition, a groove cleaner also removes old lubricant before applying the new protective coating. As a result, time spent on lubrication is reduced by up to 90 per cent compared with manual lubrication, as well as eliminating excessive waste and environmental contamination, and reducing maintenance costs.



SKF's mission is to be the undisputed leader in the bearing business. SKF offers solutions around the rotating shaft, including bearings, seals, lubrication, condition monitoring and maintenance services. SKF is represented in more than 130 countries and has around 17,000 distributor locations worldwide. Annual sales in 2018 were SEK 85 713 million and the number of employees was 44,428. www.skf.com

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