Action code: AT FIRST OPPORTUNITY

Lube Oil Treatment

SL13-582/KEL
December 2013

Concerns
Owners and operators of MAN Diesel & Turbo four-stroke diesel engines.
GenSets Type: L16/24, L21/31, L23/30H, L27/38, L28/32H, V28/32S

Summary
Insufficient treatment of lube oil is a common problem, and this Service Letter gives recommendations on future operation.

Enclosure:
B 12 15 0,
Treatment and maintenance of lubricating oil

Dear Sirs and Madams

During the last few years, IMO has requiered lower NOx emissions for HFO engines. Therefore, the engines have been readjusted to fulfil these requirements by means of retarding the fuel injection.
The adjustment may cause higher lube oil contamination, and continuous operation of the lube oil separator is therefore mandatory on the running engine.
Poor lube oil quality may cause increased wear on the crankshaft, camshaft, turbocharger and other vital parts, and replacement of expensive components may be required/necessary.
Therefore, we ask you kindly to look into the attached guideline for lube oil treatment, which can be used for both operation of the separator and design of the engine room.
If you have any questions regarding lube oil treatment, please contact:

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Yours faithfully

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L32/40, L16/24, L23/30H, L28/32H, V28/32S, L21/31, L27/38, L28/32DF, V28/32DF

General

During operation of trunk engines the lubricating oil will gradually be contaminated by small particles originating from the combustion.

Engines operated on heavy fuels will normally increase the contamination due to the increased content of carbon residues and other contaminants.

Contamination of lubricating oil with either freshwater or seawater can also occur.

A certain amount of contaminants can be kept suspended in the lubricating oil without affecting the lubricating properties.

The condition of the lubricating oil must be kept under observation (on a regular basis) by analyzing oil samples. *See Section 504.04 "Criteria for Cleaning/Exchange of Lubricating Oil"*.

The moving parts in the engine are protected by the built-on duplex full-flow lubricating oil filter. The replaceable paper filter cartridges in each filter chamber has a fineness of 10-15 microns. The safety filter, at the centre of each filter chamber, is a basket filter element, with a fineness of 60 microns (sphere passing mesh).

The pressure drop across the replaceable paper filter cartridges is one parameter indicating the contamination level. The higher the dirt content in the oil, the shorter the periods between filter cartridge replacement and cleaning.

The condition of the lubricating oil can be maintained / re-established by exchanging the lubricating oil at fixed intervals or based on analyzing oil samples.

Operation on Marine Diesel Oil (MDO) & Marine Gas Oil (MGO)

For engines exclusively operated on MDO/MGO we recommend to install a built-on centrifugal bypass filter as an additional filter to the built-on full flow depth filter.

It is advisable to run bypass separator units continuously for engines operated on MDO/MGO as separator units present the best cleaning solution. Mesh filters have the disadvantage that they cannot remove water and their elements clog quickly.

Operation on Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO)

HFO-operated engines require effective lubricating oil cleaning. In order to ensure a safe operation it is necessary to use supplementary cleaning equipment together with the built-on full flow depth filter.

It is mandatory to run bypass separator units continuously for engines operated on HFO, as an optimal lubricating oil treatment is fundamental for a reliable working condition. Therefore it is mandatory to clean the lubricating oil with a bypass separator unit, so that the wear rates are reduced and the lifetime of the engine is extended.

Bypass cleaning equipment

As a result of normal operation, the lubricating oil contains abraded particles and combustion residues which have to be removed by the bypass cleaning system and to a certain extent by the duplex full-flow lubricating oil filter as well.

With automatic mesh filters this can result in an undesirable and hazardous continuous flushing. In view of the high cost of cleaning equipment for removing micro impurities, this equipment is only rated for a certain proportion of the oil flowing through the engine since it is installed in a bypass.

The bypass cleaning equipment is operated

- continuously when the engine is in operation or at standstill

For cleaning of lubricating oil the following bypass cleaning equipment can be used:

- Separator unit
- Decanter unit
- Self cleaning automatic bypass mesh filter
- Built-on centrifugal bypass filter (standard on MAN Diesel & Turbo, Holeby GenSets)
- Bypass depth filter

The decanter unit, the self-cleaning automatic bypass mesh filter and the bypass depth filter capacity must be adjusted according to maker's recommendations.

In case full flow filtration equipment is chosen, this must only be installed as in-line cleaning upstream to the duplex full-flow lubricating oil filter, built onto the engine.

The most appropriate type of equipment for a particular application depends on the engine output, the type and amount of combustion residues, the annual operating time and the operating mode of the plant. Even with a relatively low number of operating hours there can be a great deal of combustion residues if, for instance, the engine is inadequately preheated and quickly accelerated and loaded.

Separator unit

Continuous lubricating oil cleaning during engine operation is mandatory. An optimal lubricating oil treatment is fundamental for a reliable working condition of the engine.

If the lubricating oil is circulating without a separator unit in operation, the lubricating oil will gradually be contaminated by products of combustion, water and/or acid. In some instances cat-fines may also be present.
In order to prolong the lubricating oil lifetime and remove wear elements, water and contaminants from the lubricating oil, it is mandatory to use a by-pass separator unit.
The separator unit will reduce the carbon residue content and other contaminants from combustion on engines operated on HFO, and keep the amount within MDT’s recommendation, on condition that the separator unit is operated according to MDT's recommendations.

When operating a cleaning device, the following recommendations must be observed:

- The optimum cleaning effect is achieved by keeping the lubricating oil in a state of low viscosity for a long period in the separator bowl.
- Sufficiently low viscosity is obtained by preheating the lubricating oil to a temperature of 95°C - 98°C, when entering the separator bowl.
- The capacity of the separator unit must be adjusted according to MDT's recommendations.

Slow passage of the lubricating oil through the separator unit is obtained by using a reduced flow rate and by operating the separator unit 24 hours a day, stopping only for maintenance, according to maker's recommendation.

Lubricating oil preheating

The installed heater on the separator unit ensures correct lubricating oil temperature during separation. When the engine is at standstill, the heater can be used for two functions:

- The oil from the sump is preheated to 95 – 98 °C by the heater and cleaned continuously by the separator unit.
- The heater can also be used to maintain an oil temperature of at least 40 °C, depending on installation of the lubricating oil system.

Cleaning capacity

Normally, it is recommended to use a self-cleaning filtration unit in order to optimize the cleaning period and thus also optimize the size of the filtration unit. Separator units for manual cleaning can be used when the reduced effective cleaning time is taken into consideration by dimensioning the separator unit capacity.

Operation and design flow

In order to calculate the required operation flow through the separator unit, MDT recommends to apply the following formula:

$$Q = \frac{P \times 1.36 \times n}{t}$$

Q	=	required operation flow [l/h]
P	=	MCR (maximum continuous rating) [kW]
t	=	actual effective separator unit separating time per day [hour] (23.5 h separating time and 0.5 h for sludge discharge = 24 h/day)
n	=	number of turnovers per day of the theoretical oil volume corresponding to 1.36 [l/kW] or 1 [l/HP]

The following values for "n" are recommended:

n	=	6 for HFO operation (residual)
n	=	4 for MDO operation
n	=	3 for distillate fuel

Example 1

For multi-engine plants, one separator unit per engine in operation is recommended.

For example, for a 1,000 kW engine operating on HFO and connected to a self-cleaning separator unit, with a daily effective separating period of 23.5 hours, the calculation is as follows:

$$Q = \frac{1000 \text{ x } 1.36 \text{ x } 6}{23.5} = 347 \text{ l/h}$$

To ensure optimum cleaning of the lubricating oil, the design flow must be 4 to 7 times higher than the operation flow through the separator unit.

Accordingly, the separator design flow for the example above will be in the range of 1,389-2,429 l/h.

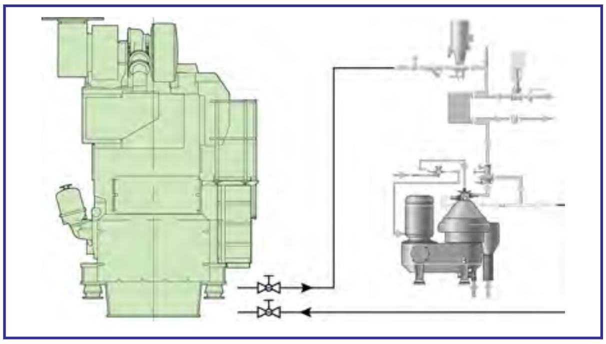


Figure 1: One separator per engine plant

Example 2

As an alternative, one common separator unit for max. three engines can be installed, with one in reserve if possible.

For the calculation in this example it is necessary include the combined average power demand of the multi-engine plant. The load profile experienced for the majority of merchant vessels is that the average power demand is around 43-50% of the total GenSet power installed. With three identical engines this corresponds to 1.3-1.5 times the power of one engine.

- Bulk carrier and tankers : ~1.3 times the power of one engine
- Container vessel : ~1.5 times the power of one engine

For example, for a bulk carrier with three 1,000 kW engines operating on HFO and connected to a common self-cleaning separator unit, with a daily effective separating period of 23.5 hours, the calculation is as follows:

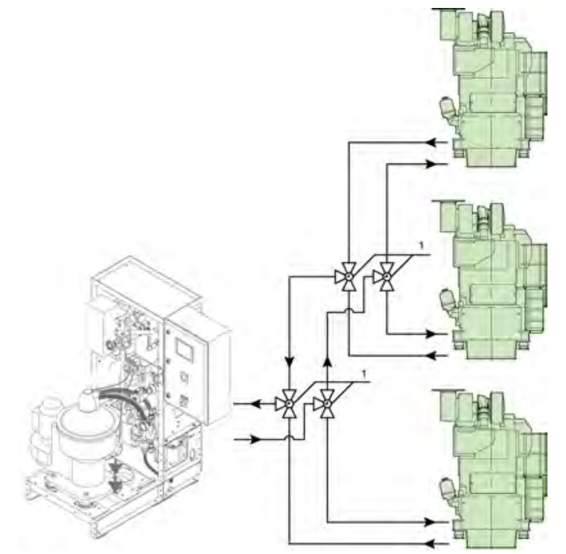
$$Q = \frac{1.3 \text{ x } 1000 \text{ x } 1.36 \text{ x } 6}{23.5} = 451 \text{ l/h}$$

Bulk carrier and tankers

To ensure optimum cleaning of the lubricating oil, the design flow must be 4 to 7 times higher than the operation flow through the separator unit.

The separator design flow for the example above will then be in the range of 1,806-3,157 l/h.

With an average power demand higher than 50% of the GenSet power installed, the operation flow must be based on 100% of the GenSet power installed.



1 Interconnected valves

Figure 2: One common separator unit for multi-engine plant

Separator unit installation

With multi-engine plants, one separator unit per engine in operation is recommended (*see figure 1*), but if only one separator unit is in operation, the following layout can be used:

- A common separator unit (*see figure 2*) can be installed, with one in reserve, if possible, for operation of all engines through a pipe system, which can be carried out in various ways. The aim is to ensure that the separator unit is only connected to one engine at a time. Thus there will be no suction and discharging from one engine to another.

It is recommended that inlet and outlet valves are connected so that they can only be changed over simultaneously.

With only one engine in operation there are no problems with separating, but if several engines are in operation for some time it is recommended to split up the separation time in turns on all operating engines.

With 2 out of 3 engines in operation the 23.5 hours separating time must be split up in around 4-6 hours intervals between changeover.

Stokes' law

The operating principles of centrifugal separation are based on Stokes' Law.

$$V = \frac{d^2 (\rho_p - \rho_l) r\omega^2}{18\mu}$$

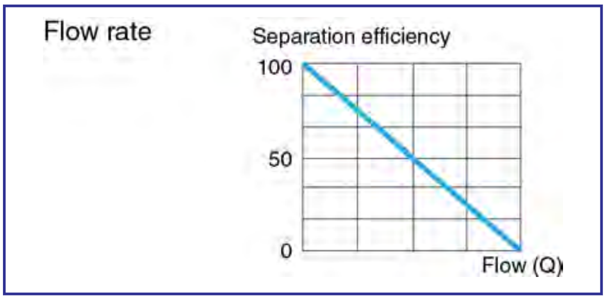
V	=	settling velocity [m/sec]
$r\omega^2$	=	acceleration in centrifgal field [m/sec^2]
d	=	diameter of particle [m]
ρ_p	=	density of particle [kg/m^3]
ρ_l	=	density of medium [kg/m^3]
μ	=	viscosity of medium [kg/m, sec.]

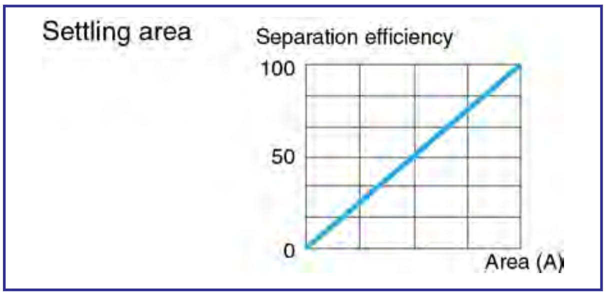
The rate of settling (V) for a given capacity is determined by Stokes' Law. This expression takes into account the particle size, the difference between density of the particles and the lubricating oil, and the viscosity of the lubricating oil.

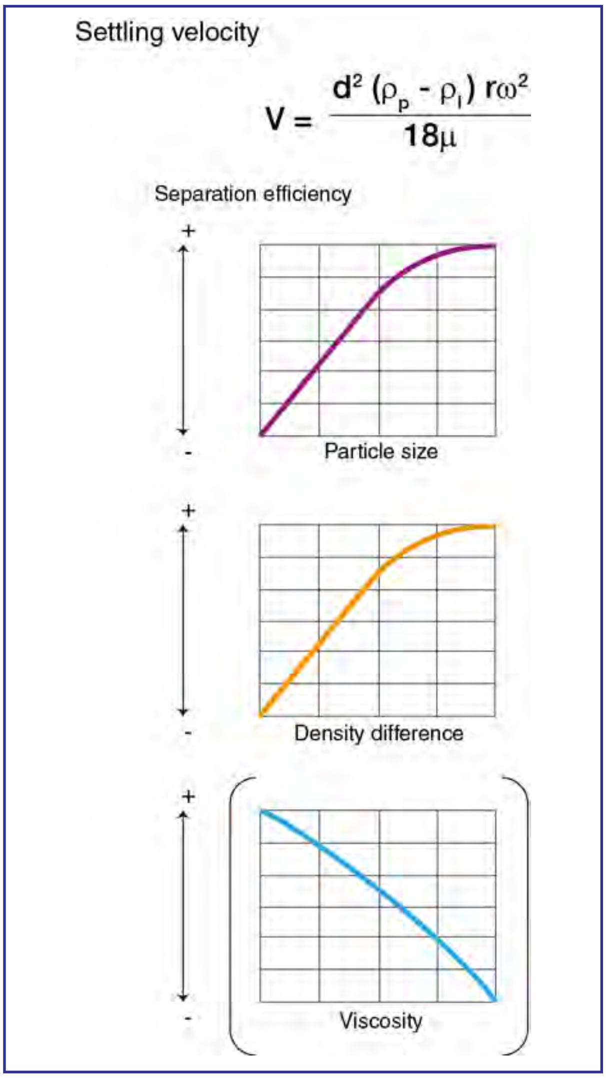
Density and viscosity are important parameters for efficient separation. The greater the difference in density between the particle and the lubricating oil, the higher the separation efficiency. The settling velocity increases in inverse proportion to viscosity. However, since both density and viscosity vary with temperature, separation temperature is the critical operating parameter.

Particle size is another important factor. The settling velocity increases rapidly with particle size. This means that the smaller the particle, the more challenging the separation task. In a centrifuge, the term ($r\omega^2$) represents the centrifugal force which is several thousand times greater than the acceleration due to gravitational force. Centrifugal force enables the efficient separation of particles which are only a few microns in size.

The separation efficiency is a function of:







Operating parameters

Various operating parameters affect separation efficiency. These include temperature, which controls both lubricating oil viscosity and density, flow rate and maintenance.

Temperature of lubricating oil before separator unit

It is often seen that the lubricating oil pre-heaters are undersized, have very poor temperature control, the steam supply to the pre-heater is limited or the temperature set point is too low.

Often the heater surface is partly clogged by deposits. These factors all lead to reduced separation temperature and hence the efficiency of the separator unit. In order to ensure that the centrifugal forces separate the heavy contaminants in the relatively limited time that they are present in the separator bowl, the separator unit must always be operated with an inlet temperature of 95-98°C for lubricating oil.

A control circuit including a temperature transmitter and a PI-type controller with accuracy of ±2°C must be installed. If steam-heated, a correctly sized steam valve should be fitted with the right KvS value. The steam trap must be a mechanical float type. The most common heaters on board are steam heaters. This is due to the fact that steam in most cases is available at low cost.

Most ships are equipped with an exhaust boiler utilizing the exhaust gases to generate steam.

A large proportion of smaller tonnage does, however, use electric heaters.

It is essential to keep the incoming oil temperature to the separator unit steady with only a small variation in temperature allowed (maximum ±2°C).

The position of the interface between oil and water in the separator bowl is a result of the density and the viscosity of the oil, which in turn depends on the temperature.

Flow rate

It is known that separation efficiency is a function of the separator unit's flow rate. The higher the flow rate, the more particles are left in the oil and therefore the lower the separation efficiency. As the flow rate is reduced, the efficiency with which particles are removed increases and cleaning efficiency thus improves. It is, however, essential to know at what capacity adequate separation efficiency is reached in the specific case.

In principle, there are three ways to control the flow:

- Adjustment of the built-in safety valve on the pump.

  This method is NOT recommended since the built-on valve is nothing but a safety valve.

  The opening pressure is often too high and its characteristic far from linear.

  In addition, circulation in the pump may result in oil emulsions and cavitation in the pump.

- A flow regulating valve arrangement on the pressure side of the pump, which bypasses the separator unit and re-circulates part of the untreated lubricating oil back to the treated oil return line, from the separator unit and NOT directly back to the suction side of the pump.

The desired flow rate is set manually by means of the flow regulating valve. Further, the requirement for backpressure in the clean oil outlet MUST also be fulfilled, helping to maintain the correct interface position.

- Speed control of the pump motor with a frequency converter or a 2-speed motor.

  This is a relatively cheap solution today and is a good alternative for flow control.

Maintenance

Proper maintenance is an important, but often overlooked operating parameter that is difficult to quantify. If the bowl is not cleaned in time, deposits will form on the bowl discs, the free channel height will be reduced, and flow velocity increases. This further tends to drag particles with the liquid flow towards the bowl's centre resulting in decreased separation efficiency.

Check of lubricating oil system

For cleaning of the lubricating oil system after overhauls and inspection of the lubricating oil piping system the following checks must be carried out:

1. Examine the piping system for leaks.
2. Retighten all bolts and nuts in the piping system.
3. Move all valves and cocks in the piping system. Lubricate valve spindles with graphite or similar.
4. Blow through drain pipes.
5. Check flexible connections for leaks and damages.
6. Check manometers and thermometers for possible damages.

Deterioration of oil

Oil seldomly loses its ability to lubricate, i.e. to form a friction-decreasing oil film, but it may become corrosive to the steel journals of the bearings in such a way that the surface of these journals becomes too rough and wipes the bearing surface.

In that case the bearings must be renewed, and the journals must also be polished. The corrosiveness of the lubricating oil is either due to far advanced oxidation of the oil itself (TAN) or to the presence of inorganic acids (SAN). In both cases the presence of water will multiply the effect, especially sea water as the chloride ions act as an inorganic acid.

Signs of deterioration

If circulating oil of inferior quality is used and the oxidative influence becomes grave, prompt action is necessary as the last stages in the deterioration will develop surprisingly quickly, within one or two weeks. Even if this seldomly happens, it is wise to be acquainted with the signs of deterioration.

These may be some or all of the following:

- Sludge precipitation in the separator unit multiplies
- Smell of oil becomes acrid or pungent
- Machined surfaces in the crankcase become coffee-brown with a thin layer of lacquer
- Paint in the crankcase peels off or blisters
- Excessive carbon is formed in the piston cooling chamber

In a grave case of oil deterioration the system must be cleaned thoroughly and refilled with new oil.

Oxidation of oils

At normal service temperature the rate of oxidation is insignificant, but the following factors will accelerate the process:

High temperature

If the coolers are ineffective, the temperature level will generally rise. A high temperature will also arise in electrical pre-heaters if the circulation is not continued for 5 minutes after the heating has been stopped, or if the heater is only partly filled with oil.

Catalytic action

Oxidation of the oil will be accelerated considerably if catalytic particles are present in the oil. Wear particles of copper are especially harmful, but also ferrous particles and rust are active. Furthermore, the lacquer and varnish oxidation products of the oil itself have an accelerating effect. Continuous cleaning of the oil is therefore important to keep the sludge content low.

Water washing

Water washing of HD oils (heavy duty) must not be carried out.

Water in the oil

If the TAN is low, a minor increase in the fresh water content of the oil is not immediately detrimental while the engine is in operation. Naturally, it should be brought down again as quickly as possible (below 0.2% water content, which is permissible, *see description "B 12 15 0/504.04 criteria for exchange of lube oil"*). If the engine is stopped while corrosion conditions are unsatisfactory, the crankshaft must be turned ½ - ¾ revolution once every hour by means of the turning gear. Please make sure that the crankshaft stops in different positions, to prevent major damage to bearings and journals. The lubricating oil must be circulated and separated continuously to remove water.

Water in the oil may be noted by steam formation on the sight glasses, by appearance, or ascertained by immersing a piece of glass or a soldering iron heated to 200-300°C in an oil sample. If there is a hissing sound, water is present. If a large quantity of water has entered the lubricating oil system, it has to be removed. Either by sucking up sediment water from the bottom, or by replacing the oil in the sump. An oil sample must be analysed immediately for chloride ions.