



OSHA **FACT** Sheet

Shipbreaking

What is shipbreaking?

Shipbreaking is the process of dismantling an obsolete vessel's structure for scrapping or disposal. Conducted at a pier, drydock or dismantling slip, it includes a wide range of activities, from removing all gear and equipment to cutting down and recycling the ship's infrastructure. Shipbreaking is a challenging process, due to the structural complexity of the ships and the many environmental, safety, and health issues involved.

What are some of the hazards associated with shipbreaking?

Shipbreaking operations expose workers to a wide range of hazards or workplace activities or conditions likely to cause injury or illness. These include the following:

Hazardous Exposures

- Asbestos—in hanger liners, mastic under insulation, cloth over insulation, cable, lagging and insulation on pipes and hull, adhesive, gaskets on piping connections, and valve packing.
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)—in rubber products such as hoses, plastic foam insulation, cables, silver paint, habitability paint, felt under septum plates, plates on top of the hull bottom, and primary paint on hull steel.
- Lead—from lead and chromate paint, lead ballast, batteries, generators, and motor components.
- Hazardous material and chemicals—including heavy metals in ship transducers, ballast, and paint coatings; mercury in fluorescent light tubes, thermometers, electrical switches, light fittings, fire detectors, and tank-level indicators; and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in self-contained refrigeration devices such as water coolers and small freezer units.
- Excess noise—associated with grinding, hammering, metal cutting, and other activities.
- Fire—from ignited insulation, matting, lagging, and residual fuel; and from lubricants and other flammable liquids.

Hazardous Work Activities

- Entry into confined, enclosed, and other dangerous atmospheres.
- Paint removal.
- Metal cutting and disposal.
- Powered industrial truck operations.
- Work on elevated surfaces, particularly near deck openings and edges.
- Bilge and ballast water removal.
- Oil and fuel removal and tank cleaning.
- Removal and disposal of ship's machinery.
- Operations involving cranes, gear, and equipment for material handling.
- Cutting and welding operations and use of compressed gas.
- Activities involving scaffolds, ladders, and working services.

