

MARSH

An eye on P&I: A marine podcast from Marsh

Episode 19: The X-Press Pearl – How events unfolded



In May 2021, the container ship X-Press Pearl, just three months old, suffered a catastrophic fire and total loss off Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The incident began with leaking nitric acid containers, and despite repeated requests, discharge and assistance were denied at multiple ports, contributing to an arguably avoidable disaster.

Environmental and operational impact

- Extensive pollution including approximately 80 billion plastic nurdles spilled onto Sri Lankan shores. These are persistent and difficult to clean up.
- Environmental damage from chemical, oil, and smoke pollution, as well as the presence of the wreck.

Wreck removal was completed by January 2024.

Claims exposure

Owners face significant claims including hull loss and multiple P&I claims covering environmental damage, wreck removal, cargo loss, and crew-related expenses.

Key takeaways

The incident:

Highlights critical gaps in port assistance and hazardous cargo management.

Underscores the severe environmental consequences of plastic pellet pollution.

Illustrates the complexity and scale of claims arising from modern container ship casualties.

Emphasises the urgent need for improved international cooperation and stronger regulations on hazardous cargo carriage and places of refuge.



For more information please contact
our podcast hosts:



John Trew
Special Advisor
Marine, Cargo, and Logistics
+44 (0)7768 288 472
john.trew@marsh.com



Chloe Taylor
Client Executive
Marine, Cargo, and Logistics
+44 (0)7585 479 350
chloe.taylor@marsh.com

Listen on **Marsh.com**



This is a marketing communication.

The information contained herein is based on sources we believe reliable and should be understood to be general risk management and insurance information only. The information is not intended to be taken as advice with respect to any individual situation and cannot be relied upon as such. Statements concerning legal, tax or accounting matters should be understood to be general observations based solely on our experience as insurance brokers and risk consultants and should not be relied upon as legal, tax or accounting advice, which we are not authorised to provide.

Marsh NV/SA (UK Branch) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for General Insurance Distribution and Credit Broking (Firm Reference No. 973191). Copyright © 2025 Marsh NV/SA. Registered in England and Wales Number: BR022344, Registered office: 1 Tower Place West, Tower Place, London EC3R 5BU. All rights reserved.

Marsh NV/SA, part of the Marsh McLennan Companies, Inc. (MMC) group, is a Lloyd's Broker and is registered as an insurance and reinsurance broker with the Belgian Financial Services Markets Authority (FSMA) under number 14.192 A-R. Marsh NV/SA having its registered office at Avenue Herrmann-Debroux/Herrmann-Debrouxlaan 2, 1160 Brussels, Belgium and is registered with the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Enterprises under the number 0403.276.906.

