

OPEN FOR BUSINESS: Vigor to welcome Norwegian Star; cruise ship repair returns to Portland

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME since a cruise ship was dry docked in Portland, OR, but not so long that many of the key senior technical managers at Vigor Industrial don't remember. One of those is Dave Byers, Vice President of Ship Repair, Oregon, at Vigor Industrial.

"No one ever thought that we'd see another dry dock here like Dry Dock #4 after it departed in 2003." Byers has been at the shipyard for 23 years and many of the key senior managers have been in place just as long. "This new dry dock shows a real commitment by management to the workers, to the shipyard, to the city, and to the region. It's a psychological uplift for people that have worked here for as long as I have who remember Dry Dock #4."

Dry Dock #4 was sold to Grand Bahama Shipyard in 2003. The new dry dock is the Vigorous, with a length of 293 meters (about 960 feet), width of 57 meters (about 186 feet), and lifting capacity of 80,000 long tons, it's the largest dry dock in North America. The dry dock can be "high and dry" within 2 and ½ hours. Built by Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries in Jiangsu Province, China, the Vigorous represents a \$50 million investment by Vigor that it hopes pays for itself with a mix of commercial and government jobs.

The first cruise ship to call at the shipyard is the 91,740 gt, 965 ft Norwegian Star, operated by NCL. The Norwegian Star finishes her 13-day Panama Canal voyage from Miami to the Port of Los Angeles on March 1. Her next departure is on March 22 for a seven-day voyage to the Mexican Riviera out of the Port of Los Angeles. She will make three stops in Mexico: Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, and Puerto Vallarta.

The Norwegian Star is due to stay in the shipyard from March 3 to 15. The repair of the Norwegian Star will include inspection and work on the ship's Azipod propulsion and steering system, bow thruster, fin stabilizer, lifeboats and davit systems, as well as tank cleaning, water blasting and underwater hull coating. The project will cost several million dollars and will employ about 750 workers per day.

"Norwegian Cruise Line is proud to join in the history of this moment in being the first cruise line to use the new facility," says Brian Swensen, Senior Vice President, Technical Operations for Norwegian Cruise Line. "The experience, equipment, machine shops,

power source availability, logistics, and overall facility bring to the cruise industry a long needed partner in the docking of our vessels, giving a dramatic improvement in what has been available on the West Coast to date."

Byers points out that there are certain capabilities required for cruise ship repair that customers can find right here at the yard. "This is a 64-acre facility, with plenty of inside and outside warehouse space. We can handle large volumes of materials, equipment, have exceptional crane capability. We can offer the services to support cruises ships—which are like floating cities—sewage, potable water, and complete power for the ship."

The Portland yard has full cold ironing capability, with shore power up to 9,600 amps at 480 volts, 11 kV or 6.6 kV, 12 whirley cranes with tandem lift capacity up to 200 MT, plenty of laydown area, warehousing capacity and logistics control, and an onsite machine shop.

Byers also says that there's a lot of logistics associated with these types of projects. "Ship owners bring in a number of specialty contractors. You have to coordinate getting people on and off the ship while she's in dock."

Byers expects his main competition for cruise ship repair to come from Victoria Shipyards, BAE Systems San Francisco, and Grand Bahama Shipyard. "It really depends on out of service time, diversion costs, and the cruise line."

But up to this point, the Vigorous has seen plenty of action since she entered service in November. "We've had 100% utilization of the dry dock since it opened," says Byers. The first two repairs were on the Maritime Administration's SS Algol and SS Capella. Next up after the Norwegian Star is the USNS Mercy, a Navy hospital ship.

Following the USNS Mercy, Vigor will dock one of its own dry docks for maintenance and underwater hull coating as it prepares to move it to its Seattle facility.

"I'm really optimistic for repair in 2015 and 2016," he says. "We've already booked two cruise ships in 2016. The dock has been booked for 25 days in 2016. I'm used to scheduling work only one to two months out."



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