How much wood would a container manufacturer chuck?

By Chris Gillis

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The Institute of International Container Lessors pursues initiative to reduce the amount of wood used in container floors. (Photo: Institute of International Container Lessors)

Fifteen years ago, the IICL realized that the industry must develop a new floor system for the millions of ocean containers in the world fleet, primarily 20-footers and 40-footers, which have traditional all-wood floors and a 12- to 15-year operational lifecycle.

Because the industry’s feet — that is the floor of the container — is the point of physical contact between the container and the bottom of the ship, its maintenance and premature wear and tear during service remains challenging.

Blust said the test was initially expected to last a year but ended up being carried out over the next 10 years of testing.

The current omega floor design adds 100 kilograms to the 2,100-kilogram tare weight of a 20-foot container, but the manufacturing and repair costs are substantially lower than traditional wooden floors.

Floor repairs account for nearly 20% of the maintenance costs, Blust said. The 10 years of service data collected on the containers since 2008 proved to the IICL that the omega pattern exceeds the performance of traditional wood.

After reviewing the results of the trials, it was decided to focus on the omega design going forward due to its advantages in the manufacturing process and for in-service repairs, Blust said.

The omega and tunnel floor designs met the criteria, IICL said.

The omega and tunnel floor designs met the criteria and the Chinese container manufacturers began to introduce their first production runs of omega containers to the international container trades.

The IICL hopes the Chinese container manufacturers will begin introducing their first production runs using the omega floor in 2021. “We think there’s a great possibility of this happening,” Blust said.

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The Institute of International Container Lessors (IICL) is a non-profit standards organization that promotes the interests of lessors, container operators, and users of ocean container shipping services worldwide. The IICL is a member of the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).