Norsk Hydro cyber-attack a ‘wake-up call’ for maritime

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Per Martin Tanggaard, director of Nor-Shipping has warned of the growing risks of maritime and ocean cyber threat, following the ransomware cyber-attack on Norsk Hydro, the aluminium producer.

“This is yet another wake-up call for industry, and particularly for the maritime segment,” warned Mr Tanggaard. “Shipping has been comparatively slow to join the digital revolution, but now that it has developments are moving fast, with ever increasing automation, connected operations and the move towards autonomy. It is absolutely essential that firms don’t just see the opportunities inherent here, but also the threats.

Norsk Hydro computer systems were initially hit by the comparatively new LockerGoga virus last week. It then spread through the firm’s network encrypting files. As a result, the company was forced to halt production in several plants, switching to increased manual operations to bypass problems connecting to its production systems. LockerGoga works by demanding payment for the decryption of infected files.

“The past two years have seen a growing number of audacious cyber-attacks on maritime players, with high profile incidents involving Maersk, COSCO and Austal, as well as ports such as San Diego and Barcelona. This is a trend that, unfortunately, is only near the beginning of the development curve. Shipping and ocean industry firms, which by their nature are involved with large and expensive assets, infrastructure and cargoes, must have strategies in place to counter risk.

“Cybersecurity should be top of the agenda for all businesses, big and small. If a company with Norsk Hydro’s resources, expertise and systems is susceptible to attack, then everybody is. Be aware.”

Admiral Michael Rogers, who served under both Presidents Obama and Trump as former director of the National Security Agency (NSA), will address issues including the evolving threat landscape and devising effective cyber strategies during his keynote on June 4 at Nor-Shipping.