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MIT Science Reporter:

'Tempest In A Tank' Study Of Mud Oceanography

Channel 2's "MIT Science Reporter" explored the Hydrodynamics Laboratory last week as the program "Tempest in a Tank," Prof. Arthur T. Ippen and Prof. Peter E. Eagleson, civil engineering, illustrated many of the department's projects in the field of coastal engineering, or what is often called "mud oceanography.

In this study one considers the characteristic wave motions of ocean water in harbors or near the shore. It has been found that a particle suspended in deep water which has wave motion will experience a circular orbit. Waves in shallow water, however, produce elliptical orbits, as the proximity of the ocean floor retards the bottom portion of the wave, distorting its form. Thus the wave motion of water has no effect below a certain depth, which is one-half the wave length.

Another property of coastal waves is its capacity for transporting sedimentation from one part of a beach to another. When waves approach the shore diagonally, they drag sand and debris in a direction parallel to the beach.

When breakwaters, or jetties, are used to protect harbors and other inlets, ocean waves pile up debris on one side of them. This sedimentation has to be dredged frequently to maintain navigation. Moreover, the initial cost of installing breakwaters is tremendous.

To solve this problem, coastal engineers are developing a device which damps ocean waves, yet does not require the cumbersome foundations of a conventional breakwater and eliminates the need for periodical dredging.

It consists of several parallel pipes suspended on the surface of the water and pointed perpendicular to the incoming wave fronts. As a wave strikes the front portion of the pipes, as a sound wave is transmitted to the other end at a speed considerably greater than that of the water wave. This causes a jet of water to flow through the pipes, and the energy of the incoming wave is reduced to 10%-20% of its original value.

Strongly enough, a problem of many harbors today is that of resonance. If a harbor is "tuned" to the frequency of incoming ocean waves by the addition of the geometrical properties, it will contain large standing waves of resonance. This leads to large difficulties when ships are being loaded and unloaded while in dock.

Various harbor shapes are tested in the laboratory tanks by propagating water waves toward an opening in a cylindrical can. Since it is nearly impossible to theoretically predict the resonance of a harbor, the scale-model method is the only practical means of solving this problem. If the resonance is determined, an adequate breakwater system can then be installed to reduce its effect.

Tau Beta Phi Picks Sixty-five Seniors

Mass Beta Chapter of Tau Beta Phi selected sixty-five pledges at its election meeting November 3. The seniors were selected from the upper fifth of their class in the School of Engineering, Architecture, and Industrial Management.

Two Honorary Juniors and a Graduate Student were also selected.

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