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US plans flag link for energy trade

Congress told that proposed new law would revive national shipping fleet

→ US maritime unions are backing a proposed new regulation which would require that up to 30% of the country's energy exports should be carried on US-flagged and US-crewed ships.

Some estimates suggest the measure could create more than 5,000 jobs for US seafarers, as well as helping to regenerate the country's merchant fleet after decades of decline.

The politician who introduced the bill in Congress last month, John Garamendi, said his 'Ener-

gizing American Maritime Act' would also boost US shipbuilding and strengthen the country's defence capabilities.

He said the US-flagged fleet had shrunk from 1,200 ships just after WW2 to fewer than 80 today. In 1955 one-quarter of US exports were carried by US-flagged ships, compared with less than 1% today.

'The state of the American maritime industry is in crisis-level decline,' Mr Garamendi warned. 'This isn't just an economic concern — it's also a national security risk. Requir-

ing even a minority of strategic energy asset exports to be carried on US-flagged ships will compel us to rebuild the technical skill to man these vessels.'

Under the bipartisan bill, 15% of exported crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) would have to be carried on US-flag vessels with effect from 2020. The requirement would increase to 30% in 2025. The proposed regulations would also require that energy exporters provide training opportunities for US seafarers.

It is forecast that the US will be the world's third largest exporter of LNG by the end of this decade and that around 100 LNG tankers would be needed to handle the output. By 2025, the US could be exporting up to 3.64m barrels of crude every day, which could require up to 380 tankers and 15,200 mariners, Mr Garamendi claims.

However, there are presently no US-registered LNG carriers, and with action by Congress he warned that almost all US energy exports will be transported on

foreign ships 'helping other nations grow their maritime industrial capabilities from the export of a strategic US energy resource'.

Captain Don Marcus, president of the Masters, Mates & Pilots union (MM&P), said the measures would 'ensure that at least some of the jobs associated with the export of LNG will go to American maritime workers and help guarantee that we will have the civilian maritime manpower needed to support America's national security requirements'.

New calls for IMO to tackle fatigue

Three-year research project reveals fresh evidence of the damaging impact of excessive hours

→ The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) faced fresh calls to tackle the long-standing problem of seafarer fatigue last month as a new report revealed further evidence of the health and safety dangers posed by long and irregular working hours.

Delegates at the IMO's human element, training and watchkeeping (HTW) committee were given a presentation on the findings of the three-year Martha project, which examined the long-term effects of fatigue and sleepiness at sea.

The results were revealed as Nautilus took part in an HTW committee working group tasked with the revision and updating of the IMO's fatigue guidelines.

The US\$1.5m Project Martha study, funded by the TK Foundation, drew on data gathered

from almost 1,000 seafarers and detailed analysis of records of fatigue levels, sleep patterns and the psychological wellbeing of more than 100 crew members gathered during the course of voyages around the world.

Carried out by researchers from universities in the UK, Denmark, Sweden and China, the study found that fatigue can result in long-term physical and mental health issues, and that both the quality and quantity of sleep and individual motivation decreases over the length of a voyage.

It also yielded evidence that night watchkeepers get significantly less total sleep than others onboard, and masters suffer more stress and fatigue than their crews.

Presenting the results at the IMO, Captain Kuba Szymanski, secretary-general of the Inter-

national Ship Managers' Association, told delegates: 'I sincerely hope the results of our research will be read and acted upon by ship managers and owners who will go on to revise their attitudes and procedures.'

'There are a number of "low-hanging fruits" which, with a little adjustment, could make a big difference,' he added. 'These are not necessarily costly changes — such as having seafarers relieved on time and organising work onboard with humans and not regulations in mind, and engaging sea staff in decisions — but empowering seafarers to take care of their lives more than it is today.'

'There is no avoiding the fact that the global fleet is increasing and more manpower is needed,' Capt Szymanski pointed out. 'However, we are demanding more from current seafarers rather than recruiting even more

cadets into the market. Attracting new seafarers and retaining them will test the industry, but we cannot ignore these findings in making the industry an attractive place for aspiring seafarers.'

In his opening speech to the HTW committee, IMO secretary-general Kitack Lim noted that fatigue 'has been increasingly recognised by the industry as a major human element hazard that affects most aspects of a seafarer's ability to perform effectively and safely'. He said he hoped delegates would ensure the organisation's updated guidelines reflect current fatigue and sleep research and the best practices of fatigue mitigation.

Nautilus professional and technical officer David Appleton represented the International Federation of Ship Masters' Associations on the working group and said that while some progress had

been made on revising the IMO guidelines a number of contentious issues had emerged.

He had argued strongly — and successfully — against shipowner proposals to remove wording about seafarers' 'excessive' working hours on the basis that the quoted figures of 12 hours a day were not normal.

There was also intense debate on research findings which defined work over 60 hours a week as 'excessive'. A decision on whether this will be included in the final paper is likely to be made at the next working group meeting.

'I also argued strongly that the guidelines need to state explicitly that "manning" is the primary factor in determining fatigue,' Mr Appleton added. 'If it is not, the guidance would not meet the objectives of being simple, practicable and useable.'

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INTERNATIONAL

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SHIP BANNED: the Russian-owned general cargoship Sormovskiy 54 has been banned from ports and anchorages in the Paris MOU port state control region after being detained for the third time in 18 months. The Palau-flagged ship is subject to a three-month refusal of access order from the 27 member states in the MOU.

INDIAN SPILL: an investigation has been launched in India following an oil spill caused by a collision between the Isle of Man-flagged LPG carrier BW Maple and the Indian-flagged product tanker Dawn Kanchipuram. An estimated 40 tonnes of fuel oil was spilled in the incident, which occurred near the port of Kamarajar.

EMERGENCY TOW: the French emergency towing vessel Abeille Languedoc was called out to tow a Dutch-flagged general cargoship to safety after it suffered a blackout in the Channel last month. The 4,106gt CFL Patron, which was carrying a cargo of steel, was towed to the port of Dunkirk for repairs to be carried out.

PONANT PROBE: authorities in New Zealand have launched investigations into two incidents involving the French cruiseship L'Austral. The 10,700gt vessel, owned by the Ponant company, was reported to have struck a rock in Milford Sound and made contact with a submerged object near Stewart Island.

GERMAN CALL: German shipbuilders have called for their government to do more to help them compete against Asian yards. They have urged ministers to beef up German maritime policy in recognition of the 'outstanding strategic importance' of the sector and to retaliate against protectionism.

CROATIAN LINK: the Italian operator Snav is set to re-open cruise ferry services to Croatia, running a daily link between Ancona and Spalato, with weekly calls to the island of Hvar from 5 April to 7 October with a possible extension for autumn sailings.

CALAIS CUTS: authorities in the French port Boulogne-Calais report a 'particularly difficult' 2016, with a 6.8% reduction in passenger loads over the year. They blamed the downturn on the UK Brexit referendum and the fall of sterling against the euro.

STOWAWAY FOUND: the Brittany Ferries vessel Barfleur was forced to return to port after a stowaway was discovered during security check of the vehicle deck on a voyage between Cherbourg and Poole last month.

GAS TERMINAL: the Dutch firm Gasunie is planning to construct a new coastal LNG gas terminal near the port of Hamburg. The facility will include a dedicated jetty for marine bunkering.

CORSICAN BOOST: the ferry firm Corsica Linea has recruited nine more officers after reporting a growth in traffic during its first full year of operations between Corsica and the French mainland.

Flag-out threat to Norway jobs

Unions warn that ferry firm's plan to switch registers could hit 700 seafarers

by Andrew Draper

➔ Norwegian unions have warned that up to 700 of their members stand to lose their jobs if the ferry company Color Line goes ahead with plans to switch some of its vessels from the Norwegian domestic register to the country's international flag (NIS).

The Norwegian government has given the green light to the proposals following a re-think of the rules over eligibility for NIS registration, which would allow ferries on 'international' routes of 175nm and above to transfer to the international register.

Business and trade minister Monica Mæland has proposed the new legislation in a move to improve business conditions for owners as part of a response to a 2014 commission report on improving the Norwegian maritime sector.

But officers' union director Hans Sande said the proposals would do nothing for workers. 'Monica Mæland has now absolutely followed up all recommendations from the commission to give owners better conditions, but has totally ruled out looking at Norwegian wages and working conditions in Norwegian waters,' he added.

'The result is that Norwegian seafarers are being sacrificed to give owners the opportunity of using cheap foreign labour.'

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions has asked



Color Line has signed an agreement with the Norwegian builder Ulstein Verft for the construction of a new 'plug-in' ferry, pictured above, which claimed to be the largest of its kind in the world. Capable of carrying up to 2,000 passengers and 500 cars, the hybrid ferry is designed to operate in environmentally sensitive areas using batteries that are recharged from shore facilities and by the generators onboard. Due to come into service in summer 2019, the ship is destined to operate on the service between Sandefjord and Stromstad.

the government to prevent the possibility of reflagging and instead come up with alternatives to keep Color Line in the NOR national register.

Ms Mæland said she had proposed the changes to the registration rules in an attempt to keep ships under the Norwegian flag. Color Line is considering a switch to Denmark's international DIS register if it is not allowed to flag to the NIS, and she warned that such a move could lead to the loss of as many as 2,500 jobs.

The unions have previously supported Color Line's exemptions from the law on gambling to allow casinos onboard and tax-free sales on routes lasting under 24 hours. The net salary scheme in Norway has also benefited the

company, they note.

'It's incomprehensible that Color Line and the government to top it all will arrange things so that the company can carry on social dumping on ferries with fixed routes to Norwegian ports,' said Johnny Hansen of the Norwegian seamen's union.

His organisation is calling on all unions to protest to parliament and demand the removal of the special taxation benefits if Color Line does flag out.

NSOF, the Norwegian officers' union, has applied to join the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and has proposed a merger of the three maritime unions into a new, 'super union'. It would be stronger in confronting the big

questions of social dumping and dealing with the government, NSOF says.

NSOF's national executive said it was important that Norwegian seafarers are strong and united in their dealings with political decision-makers, and that the union is a member of an umbrella grouping. The unions already collaborate closely and share many functions.

The union says political challenges are more demanding following the appointment of a centre-right government in 2013 and the recent downturn in the petroleum industry. 'Norwegian seafarers and Norwegian shipping are now more than ever before dependent on political choices and priorities,' it added.

Swedish SOS

➔ The Swedish officers' union SBF has questioned whether the country's new tonnage tax scheme has come too late to arrest a decline which has seen more than 150 ships flagged out in the last 14 years.

Only one ship has so far signed up to the new scheme, although SBF is cautiously expecting between five to 10 ships to flag to the country's register this year. One of the country's leading owners, Stena Line, says tonnage tax on its own won't fix Swedish shipping.



LNG carrier trials

➔ Pictured left is the Cyprus-flagged Christophe de Margerie — the world's first ice-breaking LNG carrier, which sailed from Belgium to Russia, via Norway, last month on a trial voyage.

Built by Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering for the Russian operator Sovcomflot, the ship has been designed for Russia's Yamal LNG project and will operate to ports in China, Japan and a transshipment terminal in Zeebrugge.

France urged to safeguard bunker fleet

➔ French maritime unions are calling for strict new rules to safeguard a national bunkering fleet as part of updated legislation requiring a quota of the country's domestic oil trades to be carried by French-flagged ships.

The CFE-CGC and CFTC maritime unions have written to shipowners and public authorities to put pressure on a national working group currently formulating a final document in response to the overhaul of the 1992 oil carriage act.

The two unions argue that the need for such measures has been highlighted in a recent

controversy over Esso's attempt to replace Maritima's French-flagged bunkering tanker Cap Pinède in Marseilles with the UK-registered Whitstar.

The proposals were withdrawn following a strike, and the unions argue that this should serve as an example to maintain French-flagged bunker shipping in French ports.

French seafaring unions have also voiced concern to the shipping minister over redundancies in the fleet of Le Havre-based Biomar after the company lost its charter contract for the 3,500gt biodiesel tanker Florence B. The vessel is set to withdraw from

service on the French Atlantic seaboard in April, with the loss of six officer posts and eight ratings jobs.

Meanwhile, French MP and government maritime specialist Arnaud Leroy and Jean-Marc Roué, Brittany Ferries supervisory board chairman, have called for action to defend the competitiveness of French shipping in the light of the UK's Brexit move.

Speaking at a maritime seminar in Paris last month, Mr Roué said the maritime industry was particularly exposed to the risks arising from the UK leaving the EU.

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'Green' ferry for Canadian firm

Pictured left is Seaspan Swift, a new dual-fuelled emission-reducing ferry which has come into service between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver Island.

Built by the Sedef yard in Turkey, the 4,810gt ro-ro is the first hybrid (diesel, LNG and battery-powered) vessel in service and the first LNG-fuelled ship to operate on the west coast of Canada.

Capable of carrying up to 60 trailers and classed by Bureau Veritas, Seaspan Swift is powered by two Wärtsilä 34DF engines and an advanced lithium polymer battery system.

FINE APPEAL: a Greek shipping company has lodged an appeal against a €1m fine imposed by a French court for pollution off the coast of Brittany last February. Laskardis Shipping denies responsibility for deliberately causing a 43km-long slick that was traced to one of its ships, the 75,039dwt bulk carrier Thisseas. The company is also appealing against a €30,000 fine that was imposed on the ship's Ukrainian master, who is believed to have committed suicide after the vessel was spotted by a French surveillance aircraft.

PENALTY RECORD: the US Department of Justice says 2016 was record year for prosecuting shipping companies and crew for illegal discharges from ocean-going vessels in US waters. At the end of the financial year, the department's environmental and natural resources division had imposed criminal penalties of more than \$363m in fines and more than 32 years of imprisonment from cases related to intentional discharges of pollutants from vessels.

SCRAPPING SOARS: containership scrapping could hit a record 750,000TEU of capacity in 2017, according to the market analyst Alphaliner. It said that 42,000TEU had been removed in the first three weeks of the year and 113,000TEU of ships were due to be sent for scrap in the coming weeks, putting the sector on schedule to beat the record 655,000TEU of capacity scrapped in 2016.

FEWER SPILLS: oil spills from shipping have continued a 'dramatic' long-term trend of decline, the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation reports. Its annual report reveals that spills totalled 6,000 tonnes last year, a 14% fall from 2015, and that there has been a 90% reduction in the number of major oil spills and a hundred-fold reduction in the volume of oil spill since the 1970s.

KOREAN AID: South Korea's government is spending the equivalent of US\$515m to support the containership operator Hyundai Merchant Marine (HMM) under a special state aid scheme to rescue troubled shipping and shipbuilding firms. The scheme will see the government buy HMM vessels and lease them back to the company at favourable charter rates.

LEAVE ROW: French union Fomm-CGT has criticised V.Ships France for seeking to reduce onshore leave to five days between voyages for officers serving on oil and gas tankers in the Geogas fleet. V.Ships says it is working to bring more ships into the French register, but 'suffers from a lack of competitiveness' on costs.

MASTER SENTENCED: the master of the Cyprus-flagged chemical tanker Peterpaul has received an eight-month suspended prison sentence for failing to stop after a collision with the fishing vessel Rupella off the French Atlantic coast in November 2014.

BRITTANY BUILD: French unions have called for a new LNG-powered vessel for the Brittany Ferries fleet to be built at the STX yard in St Nazaire, France, instead of Germany.

Union funds for training berths

Singapore officers' body offers support to owners employing local cadets

→ In a further attempt to minimise the impact of the downturn in world shipping, the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) has announced a scheme to provide up to S\$1.2m (€800,000) to encourage local shipowners to provide training berths for Singaporean cadets.

The union says it hopes as many as 240 officer trainees will benefit from the two-year programme which will be open to all local shipping firms with collective agreements with SMOU.

Under the scheme, the union will provide a S\$5,000 (€3,300) contribution to cover the costs of training berths for every cadet in the country's Tripartite Nautical Training Award and Tripartite Engineering Training Award (TNTA and TETA) programmes.

'This serves to encourage the shipping companies to give Singaporean cadets an opportunity to have the shipboard training they require in order to move on to become fully-fledged officers in the future,' the union said.

'More importantly, it supports the development of the Singaporean core in the maritime sector so as to have a bigger pool of qualified maritime talents even in the current economic conditions.'

Almost 300 Singaporean cadets have been trained under the TNTA and TETA initiatives, which



Singapore's education minister Ong Ye Kung is pictured with Tripartite Engineering Training Award cadets as the SMOU announced its new scheme to encourage the provision of berths for officer trainees. Picture: SMOU

are presently supported by more than 20 shipping companies. Subsidies for the cadets' course fees and training allowances are provided through two government agencies.

SMOU's support for training berths means the union has now pledged some S\$3m to support local employment and training. Late last year it launched a scheme to help owners with the costs of hotel accommodation for its members, and it has also made a S\$1.5m contribution to help companies with welfare and training costs.

SMOU general secretary Mary

Liew said: 'Faced with the prolonged volatile economic situation, shipping companies may naturally take cost-saving measures such as cutting down on training. We are trying to reduce that as we need qualified seafarers to maintain a strong Singaporean core.'

'This is why SMOU is constantly looking for ways to help encourage shipping companies to provide these critical training berths to our Singaporean TNTA/TETA cadets.'

The union's support was welcomed by Singapore's education minister Ong Ye Kung when he spoke at the SMOU and Wavelink

Lunar New Year lunch last month. '2016 has been a very challenging year for many in the maritime industry,' he said. 'Notwithstanding, we held our own. Last month it was reported that Singapore retained its spot as the world's top bunkering port in 2016, the Singapore registry of ships maintained its growth momentum and the total tonnage of ships under Singapore flag has increased, helping Singapore retain its position as one of the top 10 ship registries in the world.'

'There are silver linings in the clouds, and the industry is well poised to ride the next wave.'

Italy told to do more to support its seafarers

→ An Italian opposition MP has written to the country's transport minister accusing the government of abandoning seafarers by failing to implement effective employment policies.

Luigi Gallo said that the sea is a fundamental resource for the whole of Italy and merchant seafarers deserve decent conditions of employment. He said the government should

recognise seafaring as an essential sector with proper training, jobs, certificates and pensions.

His move follows a protest by Federmanager, the confederation of three Italian officers' and masters' unions, over government moves to downgrade the qualifications for engineer officers.

Federmanager has urged the Italian authorities not to press ahead with plans to allow

uncertificated personnel to take on engineer officer functions.

Italian unions had already strongly criticised the government's failure to meet the 31 December 2016 deadline for STCW certificate revalidation. The maritime wing of the UILtrasporti union said the move to extend the process until the end of March has proved to be successful.

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SEAFARER FATIGUE

Let's not be caught napping

Powerful new academic research is adding weight to demands for the industry to wake up to fatigue, writes **ANDREW LININGTON...**

Cynics might suggest that we know all that we need to know about the problems posed by seafarer fatigue. But the team behind the three-year Martha research project were determined to take awareness to a new level.

In a report detailing the research results, they note how previous studies — such as the EU-funded Project Horizon — and a growing pile of accident investigation reports have demonstrated 'the serious impact that sleepiness and fatigue may have on the safety and welfare of seafarers'.

But while the evidence has mounted and understanding of the need to manage the risks of fatigue has grown, the Martha team point out that much less is known about the longer term psycho-social effects of the long hours worked at sea.

The US\$3m study, sponsored by the TK Foundation, involved experts in the UK, Sweden, Denmark and China and used a mixture of research methods — including extensive onboard measurements of seafarer performance — to assess levels of sleepiness and long-term fatigue, and the impact on motivation and behaviour.

Researchers said the project has uncovered important new evidence about the way fatigue and



Fatigue was a factor in the grounding of the Antigua & Barbuda-registered general cargo ship Danio in March 2013, above. The 1,499gt vessel ran onto rocks in the Farne Islands nature reserve after the OOW fell asleep on the bridge and failed to correct the ship's course Picture: MAIB

stress levels change during a voyage, how they affect various ranks in different ways, and how they ultimately reduce motivation over the length of a tour of duty.

Captains were found to suffer the highest levels of stress and fatigue, and both the quantity and quality of sleep was found to deteriorate over long voyages.

Sleepiness levels vary a little during the voyage, suggesting there are opportunities for recovery, the report notes. However, overall, 'there is a small but significant decrease in the amount of sleep in a 24-hour period over the course of time'.

Four shipping companies, together operating more than 500 ships, took part in the study. The vessels included product tankers running intensive services in NW Europe, containerships on liner routes between the Far East and Europe, and Asia and South America, bulk carriers trading worldwide, and tankers operating in Far Eastern waters.

The research was based on almost 1,000 questionnaires completed by seafarers and managers in Europe and China, as well as onboard diaries filled out by crew members over tours of duty as long as six months.

Detailed measurements were taken from volunteer seafarers who wore special watches recording their activity, along with readings of their sleep and stress levels together with hours of work and voyage data.

Feedback from seafarers suggested officers generally have less sleep than ratings and suffer higher levels of stress. On average, officers reported 7.8 hours of sleep in every 24, compared with 8.4 for ratings.

The average number of normal weekly working hours recorded by all crew was 67 — although the study notes that these figures do not include overtime hours.



Questionnaires and interviews with European and Chinese seafarers and managers examined cultural differences in the interpretation of regulatory frameworks on hours of work and rest and the way in which organisational practices affect seafarer fatigue.

The researchers found that while European and Chinese seafarers may allocate different priorities to fatigue factors, they do share the same perceptions about the major factors that influence fatigue onboard.

They also found evidence of higher levels of fatigue and stress in seafarers from Chinese-managed companies than European-managed ones. 'This suggests that differences in organisational factors are significant in affecting fatigue mitigation onboard,' the report points out.

Data gathered from 110 seafarers during field studies revealed that 61% of all crew consider themselves to be more fatigued at the end of a voyage than at the beginning, irrespective of the actual length of the voyage.

Researchers found perceptions about fatigue and voyage length varied significantly according to rank and role. A majority of day work crews, engineers and cooks reported that they were less fatigued or the same by the end of the tour. In contrast, a small majority of second and third deck officers reported that they felt more fatigued at the end of their tour than at the beginning, and a very large majority of masters said their fatigue levels were higher at the end of their tour of duty than at the beginning.

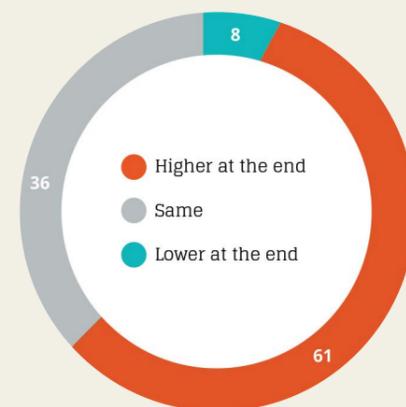
The results from the questionnaires showed that there were some differences between the ideal and actual sleep lengths for officers and ratings, although their perceptions of sleepiness, quality of sleep and levels of stress were quite similar to each other.

Almost 50% of seafarers said their stress levels were higher at the end of a voyage, 41% said they

Issues which were repeatedly mentioned by seafarers as contributing to their fatigue and sleepiness levels were (in no particular order of priority):

- new regulations and more requirements placed on seafarers
- increased inspections and more paperwork
- the bad condition of ships' accommodation
- the lack of proper maintenance
- work in port
- working onboard a new ship
- the quality and professionalism of colleagues

Fatigue: is it higher or lower at the end of a voyage?



The report highlights the serious risks presented by fatigue:

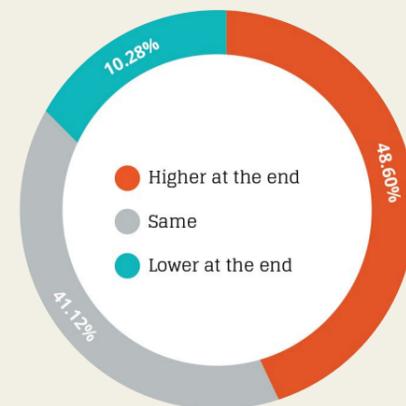
The health effects of fatigue also cover mental fatigue, and there can be at least four recognisable symptoms: being fretful, irritable, unhappy and finding it easy to get into conflict with others.

Incidents of insomnia and homesickness are more serious when seafarers are fatigued. The effects of sleepiness and fatigue can also be a significant and contributory factor in accident causation, which can result in environmental pollution, machinery damage and fire.

Chronic effects of fatigue include:

- sleeping disorders
- insomnia
- sleep apnoea and hypopnoea
- delayed/advanced sleep phase syndrome
- cardiovascular disorders, myocardial infarction, strokes and hypertension
- gastrointestinal disorders, peptic ulcers, and irritable bowel syndrome
- metabolic disorders, such as diabetes and hyperlipemia
- mental disorders, depression

Stress: is it higher or lower at the end of a voyage?



Sleepiness and fatigue: what's the difference?

- | | |
|---|--|
| Sleepiness | Fatigue |
| ■ healthy individuals | ■ may cause health disorders (physical & mental) |
| ■ rapid onset | ■ insidious onset |
| ■ short duration | ■ persists over time |
| ■ short-term effect on daily activities | ■ significantly affects behaviour and wellbeing |

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SEAFARER FATIGUE

Pictured presenting the Martha Project findings at the International Maritime Organisation last month are, left to right: Michelle Grech, from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority; Professor Mike Barnett, from Southampton Solent University; and Captain Kuba Szymanski, secretary general of InterManager
Picture: Southampton Solent University



were the same, and just over 10% said they were lower.

The project team used two specific and validated measures of sleepiness and long-term fatigue to assess seafarers at different stages of their voyage. They found that the risk of falling asleep through tiredness on watch is present at all stages of the voyage — and very high levels of sleepiness were found to increase after six months onboard.

The report says the findings indicate that motivation decreases with time at sea. “This is a significant finding because it offers an explanation for recent reports of casualties occurring on vessels where the crew, including the captain, have been onboard for longer than six months”, it adds. ‘Reduced motivation may lead to complacency, individuals taking short-cuts and “work-arounds” and not following the correct procedures.’

Results from the ‘actiwatches’ worn by 70 seafarers on 12 different vessels in the study provided data on the total amount of sleep gained and the quality of the sleep obtained. Important findings from this included the fact that both the amount of sleep and the quality of sleep — as measured by wake bouts and fragmented sleep — decreased over time for all crew.

The results reveal that while captains and day workers get more sleep than watchkeepers, captains are more at risk of fatigue than other ranks. Night watchkeepers (second officers) were found to get significantly less sleep than others and to be most at risk of falling asleep on duty.

The project team held a series of workshops around the world to gather feedback on the findings and to consider the causes of fatigue at sea and some of the ways in which the problem could be tackled (see box) and the report concludes that there are a number of ‘simple operational solutions which can ensure sleep is easier for those onboard through fatigue risk management’.

These solutions should involve seafarers and those agencies ashore which impact on shipboard operations, the report adds.

The study highlights the role that Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS) could play in addressing the problems. Such techniques are used in other safety-critical workplaces and in aviation, road and rail, the report notes. However, it points out, ‘evidence from recent marine accident investigations indicates that the use of FRMS in the shipping industry is less mature than in other safety-critical transport industries, and less advanced in exploring such concepts in practical operational settings’.

The researchers said there is evidence from several safety-critical industries revealing ‘a conceptual move away from prescriptive regulations — which seek to mitigate the risk of fatigue through limiting the hours of work — to a more goal-based system that involves the employment of FRMS.’

FRMS presents an integrated systems approach to managing the risk of fatigue, the report explains, covering policies, operational aspects and quality assurance. ‘It requires ownership by all in the company, changes in culture and can be introduced in a gradual process as the company develops its own approach’.

The Martha team reported positive feedback from seafarers and managers on the concept of FRMS and the report suggests how successful implementation of such systems could be used to shift attitudes and raise awareness.

Fatigue incident reporting is another important element of the systems approach, and needs to be part of a transparent and blame-free culture, the report argues. ‘Employees will be reluctant to report incidents which may be caused by sleepiness or gen-

eral fatigue if they think that there will be recriminations.’

FRMS can form part of a ‘continuous improvement cycle’ for a safety management system, it adds, and it can be developed to provide a more interactive approach where schedules can be set using biomathematical prediction tools and, ultimately, where seafarers can take more ownership of the system themselves by reporting incidents, and keeping a check on their own and colleagues’ fatigue levels.

The researchers end on a positive note, suggesting that the development of new data collection, transmission and analysis techniques will accelerate the process of improved fatigue risk management. And in the longer term, improved vessel design will make a significant impact in reducing the effects of sleepiness and fatigue, the report adds. ‘The technology exists now to combine the power of big data and predictive analysis with the science underpinning fatigue, stress, health and wellbeing to provide better health and welfare services to seafarers wherever they may be,’ it concludes.

The report also outlines a number of other areas for potential future research. These include:

- what is the optimum tour of duty length? Should there be a maximum shorter than the MLC requirement?
- how long should recovery time between voyages be?
- how does cognitive performance deteriorate over time due to fatigue and stress?

■ how does ‘mood’ change over time? Does this have a significant effect on the psychological well-being of seafarers?

Other areas of research include the further development of FRMS concepts for the shipping industry. Specific goals are:

- the development of improved fatigue prediction models
- the development of instruments to survey psychological wellbeing over the long term
- the development of models of how long-term fatigue and recovery may be predicted

Speaking about the future impact of the study, Southampton Solent University Emeritus Professor Mike Barnett said: ‘The shipping industry has been following Martha’s progress with interest, as the momentum for revising the guidance on fatigue has grown at the International Maritime Organisation.’

‘Of particular interest for future research are our findings on individual mood, team-working and social cohesion, all of which appear to deteriorate after about six months onboard. We need to know more about these phenomena. I am very excited about the possibilities of using wearable technologies to collect and transmit data on both physical and psychological aspects of seafarers’ health and wellbeing.’

‘The use of technology to create smart shipping is on the increase,’ said Captain Kuba Szymanski, from the international ship managers’ association InterManager. ‘We are entering a phase when big

What can be done to combat the problem? Feedback gathered from seafarers and managers by the research team included the following suggestions:

Working conditions

- Participants sought improvements in:
- safe manning levels
 - nutrition and good food onboard
 - hours of work and rest
 - stress onboard through harassment and bullying

Vessel design and living environment

- Participants sought improvements in:
- noise and vibration levels
 - temperature
 - quality of accommodation spaces
 - bedding (eg change of mattresses)
 - exercise facilities onboard
- Some of these issues are covered in the Maritime Labour Convention, to apply to new vessels, and the report says that measures will need to be evaluated further as the requirements come into force.

Operational issues

- Participants sought improvements in:
- being relieved on time and having a KPI to measure it
 - revision of company reporting requirements in order to reduce bureaucracy
 - communication between ship and shore
 - logistics: port calls to be better organised and discussed with sea staff
 - timings of inspections onboard by external parties
 - time management — for example, the timing of Notices of Readiness
 - recovery time during the voyage — for example, going to anchor

‘Participants also recognised that there needs to be a cultural change in the industry’s attitude towards fatigue by both seafarers and shore management,’ the report points out. ‘The response: “but it’s always been like this” was no longer seen as acceptable.’

Awareness and cultural change also apply to the agencies ashore who interact with ships and personnel — charterers, agents and port state officials — the report stresses.

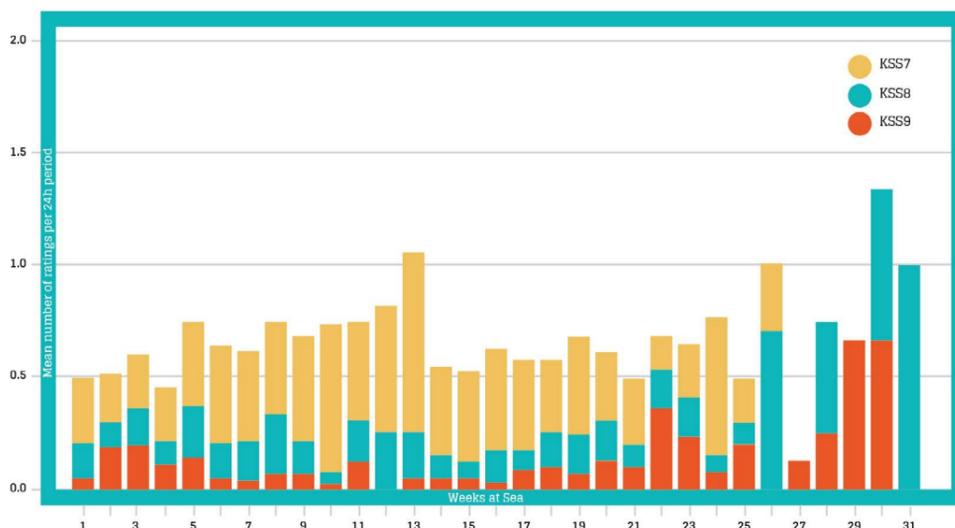
data and analytical processes allow us to pass information on the ship’s equipment to the office — so why not the crew too? We are close to developing means by which individual seafarers can monitor their own wellbeing onboard and this will help to raise awareness of fatigue and the importance of healthy living onboard.’

Claire Pekcan, Professor of Maritime Applied Psychology at Warsash Maritime Academy, said she is also interested in the impact of assistive technologies onboard. She is engaged in other projects related to autonomous vessels, and wonders whether ships in the future may have technologies which intervene when seafarers show signs of fatigue. Basic research is needed which indicate these states, she adds.

Prof Pekcan has also just finished a major study on the effects of ego depletion and safe behaviour, which relates to the findings of Martha. ‘Our individual energy levels work like a battery,’ she points out. ‘As long voyages make us more fatigued, the battery drains and we need to re-energise. We need to know more not only about the optimum lengths of tours of duty, but also how long recovery should be during and between voyages. And what activities promote recovery?’

KSS The Karolinska Sleepiness Scale

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Extremely alert | 6. Some signs of sleepiness |
| 2. Very alert | 7. Sleepy, no effort to stay awake |
| 3. Alert | 8. Sleepy, some effort to stay awake |
| 4. Quite alert | 9. Very sleepy, great effort to keep awake, fighting sleep. |
| 5. Neither alert nor sleepy | |



The diagram above shows the KSS scores over 7 for all 110 seafarers who completed them at different stages of the voyage.

The scores were calculated using an anchoring mechanism, so they show comparable scores at various weeks into a voyage for each

individual. Consequently, the KSS scores cover from week 1 to over 6 months.

From previous research, a KSS score over 7 indicates a high risk of falling asleep. The most significant results, which the diagram illustrates, are as follows:

- the risk of falling asleep through tiredness is present at ALL stages of the voyage, making it a safety risk at all stages of the voyage
- very high levels of sleepiness (KSS of 8 or 9) are apparent and increasing after six months onboard

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CREW RESCUED: nine crew members were rescued from a flag of convenience ship which ran aground and partially sank on the rocky coast of Andros, Greece, last month. Hellenic Coast Guard officials said the Antigua & Barbuda-flagged Cabrera had grounded while en route from the Greek port of Larimna to Torino, Finland. A naval helicopter rescued the crew of four Filipinos, three Poles, one Ukrainian and one Lithuanian national.

STRANDED SEAFARERS: four Pakistani seafarers from a crew of 17 who were stranded for four months onboard a Kuwaiti-flagged cargoship detained in Egypt for non-payment of dues were allowed to return home last month. Pakistan's government has been urged to secure the release of the remaining 13 crew from the 5,448gt Akkaz, which had been on charter to a Dutch company.

MASTER ARRESTED: Indonesian police arrested the master of an inter-island ferry after 24 people died when the vessel caught fire off Jakarta last month. Initial reports claimed that more than 230 people were onboard the Zahro Express, but the manifest showed that only 100 were registered as passengers, along with six crewmen.

LATVIAN LINK: Swedish Orient Line is opening a new weekly ro-ro route between Ventpils (Latvia), Zeebrugge (Belgium) and Tilbury (UK) from the end of January. Cargo types accommodated on the new route include trailers, shipper own containers, and other rolling cargo as well as break-bulk cargo loaded on roll trailers.

ROCKET ATTACK: seven Pakistani seafarers were reported to have been killed when a rocket hit the Iranian general cargoship Jouya 8 off the coast of Yemen, while the vessel was en route from Egypt to Dubai. The ship's chief officer survived after jumping into the sea and swimming ashore.

HOSTAGES FREED: three Russian crew members kidnapped by pirates from the Greek merchant vessel Saronic Breeze off the coast of Cotonou, west Africa, have been released in a satisfactory condition and have been repatriated, according to the Russian foreign affairs ministry.

GREEK GROWTH: the Greek merchant fleet grew by 6.5% in numerical terms and 10.3% in deadweight tonnage last year. The country's fleet now stands at 5,230 ships totalling 355.9m dwt, with the average age falling from 14.7 years in 2012 to 12.2 years now.

PRIDE RESTORED: the former P&O ferry Pride of Portsmouth — now the 33,336gt SNAV Lazio — is being used by the Italian operator Gran Navi Veloci to reopen its service between the French port of Sète and Nador, in Morocco.

JAPAN SINKING: all 26 crew from the 6,558gt North Korean cargoship Chong Gen were rescued after the vessel sank off the coast of Japan last month.

Maersk pressed over AHTS losses

French minister calls for an urgent investigation into sinking of two vessels

by Jeff Apter

→ France has called for Denmark to carry out an urgent investigation of the circumstances in which two Maersk offshore support vessels sank off the country's coast while being towed to be scrapped in Turkey.

The unmanned and decommissioned AHTS vessels Maersk Searcher and Maersk Shipper foundered in force 3 winds on 22 December while being towed from Denmark by the Danish-flagged AHTS Maersk Battler.

The French authorities had been notified that Maersk Searcher had sunk some 60nm off Brittany after taking on

water, and that Maersk Shipper had capsized 10nm away before sinking shortly afterwards. The vessels are estimated to be in water depths of 140m to 155m.

Maersk Supply Service said both vessels had been emptied of fuel and lubricants in preparation for scrapping.

However, the French Atlantic maritime prefecture said that its investigations had shown each of the two hulls contained about 100 cu m of hydrocarbon residues.

In addition, flights over the site of the sinkings had twice detected some discoloration of the sea, although this had rapidly disappeared through evaporation and wave action.

The French environmental organisation Mor Glaz claimed that the two hulls had contained substantial amounts of heavy fuel oil and should not have been authorised to leave for demolition in Turkey.

Mor Glaz said it wanted to know why Maersk Battler had not been ordered to divert to the port of Brest so that its crew could be questioned. And another French green group, Robin des Bois, said the tow should not have been undertaken through the Bay of Biscay at a time of high risk of adverse weather conditions.

The maritime prefecture said it had asked Maersk to carry out a thorough investigation of the two wrecks to determine the nature of

the damage sustained and their condition, and to carry out the necessary actions 'to avert any serious potential danger to the environment'.

And French environment minister Ségolène Royal has written to her opposite number in Denmark to call for a 'prompt investigation by the competent authorities' — which should include the involvement of French experts. She said Maersk had been asked to provide the towing certificates for the two hulls.

Maersk said it was carrying out its own investigation into the cause of the incident and was fully cooperating with the French authorities.



Open first for Northern Sea Route

→ The 17,634gt heavy lift ship HHL Valparaiso, pictured above, has become the first vessel to sail open hatch through the Northern Sea Route as it delivered two huge ship-to-shore (STS) cranes to a port in the Russian far east. Owned by the German operator Hansa Heavy Lift (HHL), the Liberian-flagged ship carried the cranes — each weighing 820 tonnes and

measuring 61m high and 92m wide — from St Petersburg to the port of Vostochny.

HHL project and transport engineer Heinrich Nagrelli said the voyage had required careful planning and the use of highly experienced seafarers.

'Due to the STS's very high centre of gravity at 30m above deck and 70m air draft, as well as draft

restriction of 7.7m, a careful and detailed plan was needed from the start,' he explained.

'This included a load spreading design and a structural analysis of the hatch covers and lower hold, a lifting stability assessment, a lifting simulation, and the approval of the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping, as well as the arranging of ice-breaker assistance.'

Indian call for clarity on tax law

→ India's two main seafaring unions have urged the country's government to put an end to legal confusion over the tax status of their members.

The National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) and the Maritime Union of India (MUI) have jointly called for seafarers to be given tax relief for overseas earnings following a recent 'landmark' ruling by the Kolkata tax appeal tribunal.

The court held that income earned by an engineer officer for 286 days of overseas work for a foreign shipping company is not liable to be taxed in India.

The unions have asked the finance ministry to issue a circular to clarify that 'taxation of such hard-earned income of seafarers who spend months away from their families is not justified by merely on the grounds that they bring back such incomes to India'.

\$2.7m 'magic pipe' fines

→ Two Greek shipping companies have been fined a total of US\$2.7m and put on probation for five years in the latest case involving illicit 'magic pipe' oily waste discharges.

The penalties were imposed on Oceanfleet Shipping and Oceanic Illsabe, the operator and owner of the Liberian-flagged bulk carrier Ocean Hope, which was found to have made illegal discharges for at least six months in 2015.

The ship's chief engineer was sentenced to 12 months in prison in December, and the second engineer received a nine month sentence for their role in the waste dumping.

Canadian cabotage protests

→ International Transport Workers' Federation leaders have spoken out in support of Canadian union calls for tougher controls against the use of foreign crews in the country's cabotage trades.

Rallies were held in Montreal, Toronto, Prince Rupert, Victoria and Vancouver in protest at Canadian government attacks on the current

regulatory restrictions. They follow a decision, late last year, by the operator Woodward Coastal Shipping to lay off 104 Canadian seafarers and to bring in foreign crews.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin commented: 'Cabotage is a no-brainer. Its merits are obvious. To attempt to roll it back in a country like Canada where it has been proved to be so valuable is

baffling. It defies logic.'

ITF general secretary Steve Cotton added: 'We're glad to see the ITF standing as part of this important national initiative that seeks to keep Canada strong, skilled and employed. Cabotage protects jobs, coastal communities and even national security, all concepts that Canadians understand and support.'

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Australian union welcomes first LNG ferry

The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE) has welcomed the introduction into service of the LNG-powered ferry Searoad Mersey II on the route between Melbourne and Devonport, Tasmania. Built by Flensburger in Germany, the Australian-flagged and Australian-crewed ship is the first to operate in the country's coastal trades using LNG fuel and is the first pure dry cargo ship

in the world to use a roll-on roll-off LNG supply system.

The 24,409gt Searoad Mersey II replaces a 7,928gt vessel on the Bass Strait freight service, boosting capacity with the ability to carry up to 80 trailers, 110 cars and light vehicles, hazardous cargo and livestock. The dual-fuel vessel has twin MaK M46DF main engines and a service speed of 20.5 knots.

AIMPE has congratulated Searoad for the courage to make the A\$110m (£68m) investment in the vessel at a time when most sectors of Australia's coastal shipping industry have been in decline. 'The number of Australian-registered major trading ships licensed for Australia's coastal trades is down to 12, so the arrival of a new Australian flag ship gives a much-needed boost to morale,' said federal secretary Martin Byrne.

STRAITS SMASH: an investigation was launched last month after two containerships collided off the Malaysian port of Pasir Gudang. A major clean-up operation was mounted after some 300 tonnes of bunker oil leaked from a damaged tank on the Gibraltar-flagged APL Denver following the collision with the Singapore-registered Wan Hai 301. Each of the two owners were ordered to pay a RM1m (\$223,000) bond towards the costs of the counter-pollution work.

SURFER SAVED: a surfer in distress some 3nm from the Australian coast was rescued by the crew of a 6,400TEU containership last month. The Mediterranean Shipping Company vessel Damla recovered the Japanese tourist after he had survived a night at sea in choppy conditions. He was given dry clothes and food, and wrapped in blankets until he was transferred to a pilot vessel from Port Kembla and taken ashore.

ITALIAN AID: the European Commission has given the green light to an Italian government scheme to shift domestic freight from the country's roads to shortsea shipping. The €138m Marebonus package aims to cut pollution and ease transport congestion by providing support for new shipping services or upgrading existing operations. The Commission has ruled that the scheme is in line with the EU's state aid guidelines.

NIGERIAN JOBS: Nigeria's maritime sector has lost 6,000 jobs as a consequence of the economic downturn, the president of the country's Maritime Workers Union (MWUN) has warned. Emmanuel Nted called for government action to address the problems, pointing out that the union has been forced to accept marginal pay increases and cuts in working conditions to head off redundancy threats.

FATAL COLLISION: an investigation has been launched after 11 people died when a 13,100TEU containership collided with a small passenger vessel off the coast of Peru last month. Twelve survivors were rescued from the water after the collision between the Panama-flagged MSC Regulus and the Ecuadorian vessel Don Gerado II.

CRUISE ORDERS: at least 97 new cruiseships are expected to enter service between 2017 and 2026, according to a new industry report. The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) said companies are set to bring 26 new ocean, river and specialty ships into operation this year and passenger numbers are expected to rise to 25.3m.

ETV ALERT: a Dutch emergency towing vessel was called to the aid of a containership which lost 15 boxes in severe conditions in the North Sea last month. The Dutch Coastguard sent the ETV Guardian to assist the Marshall Islands-flagged Red Cedar, which was sailing from the Germany to Antwerp at the time.

STRIKE OFF: Icelandic shipping company Eimskip has averted an industrial action by its crews following agreement on a three-year pay deal for members of the Iceland Seaman's Union.

French protest at UK bunker move

Marseilles seafarers strike over plan to switch contract to Whitaker Tankers

by Jeff Apter

French seafarers staged strike action last month over fears that their jobs were at risk as a result of a plan to switch a bunkering contract to the UK firm John H. Whitaker (Tankers).

The CGT officers' and ratings' union began the stoppage to protest at Esso's failure to renew the contract for the Marseilles-based bunker supply vessel Cap Pinède, owned by the French firm Compagnie Maritima. They said the move would mean the loss of 18 of the 47 seafaring jobs at the company.

Unions complained Esso's decision represented 'social dumping' in the French shipping industry, setting a precedent that

could affect many more jobs. 'We have nothing against competition, but we want it to be carried out with the same social and technical constraints as ours,' said CFDT union rep Nicolas Errani.

'We have nothing against foreigners, we just want them to have a contract of employment under French law.'

The strike was called off after three weeks when the unions said they had secured guarantees about the sustainability of the operations for the next two years.

The dispute comes at a time when the French unions have won concessions from the government and oil transporters to favour the use of French-flagged ships to carry domestic oil cargoes.

The CGT and CFDT unions wel-

comed the third version of the amended 1992 oil carriage law — which will require 5.5% of all oil products to be shipped on French vessels — although they say the 'final' version should go further in establishing their long-term aim for a strategic French oil fleet.

The decree is due to come into effect on 1 July 2017 — one year behind schedule — and will stipulate that 20% of the refined products should be carried on vessels of under 20,000gt, in a bid to maintain a mixed fleet.

The unions have also welcomed a decision by the French containership company CMA CGM to offer ratings the chance to train to become officers. The company said the new policy would lead to an increase in the number of French officers it

employs.

Representatives from the CGT and CFDT unions have demonstrated in the port of Dunkirk over a decision by the French seismic vessel operator CGG to re-flag its 12,812gt research vessel Geo Coral.

The unions fear the ship is being switched to the Norwegian register after CGG broke off its crewing contract with Louis Dreyfus Armateurs for a joint venture with Norwegian partner Eidedvik. CFDT delegate Oriane Higuélin said that while the French government claimed it wanted to boost the maritime sector, and CGG had been recapitalised with taxpayers' money, jobs and the French flag were being jeopardised.



Brittany promises cleanest ship in UK

French operator Brittany Ferries has ordered what it claims will be 'one of the cleanest, most environmentally-friendly ships to operate in UK waters' — an LNG-powered ro-pax, pictured above.

Due to be launched in 2019, the 42,000gt ship will be built by Flensburger in Germany and will operate

alongside the cruise ferry Mont St Michel on the service between Portsmouth and Caen, which provides up to three daily return sailings.

The 185m vessel will be capable of carrying up to 1,680 passengers, 130 freight trailers, or 550 cars and 64 freight trailers.

Danish crews going digital

Denmark is doing away with paper discharge books and is making all its seafarer service records digital.

The move has been welcomed by the CO-Søfart union and the country's shipowners, who say it will reduce paperwork by removing the mandatory reporting of signing on and off for Danish ships with effect from 1 January this year.

Danish Maritime Administration officials say the new system will also make it faster and easier for seafarers to verify their seagoing service before applying for certificates.

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MAERSK MONITORS: the French Atlantic seaboard maritime authority has told Maersk Supply Service to set up a three-year programme to monitor the risk of pollution from two of its vessels which sank off Brittany in December last year. Maersk Searcher and Maersk Shipper sank some 60nm off the French coast while being towed by the Danish-flagged AHTS Maersk Battler to a scrapyard in Turkey. Although Maersk said that both ships had been emptied of fuel and lubricants, French authorities are concerned about the risk of pollution from hydrocarbon residues. The monitoring plan requires an analysis of the contents of the tanks on both vessels and checks of the state of the wrecks.

FINNISH PROTEST: seafaring unions in Finland have slammed a decision to use a mixed nationality crew onboard a Finnish Border Guard vessel during a six-month deployment to support EU patrols in the Mediterranean. The unions dispute claims there are not enough Finnish crew to operate the ship and argue that foreign seafarers should not be allowed to serve on a vessel with strategic functions.

CREW REPATRIATED: 23 Chinese seafarers stranded onboard a flag of convenience general cargoship detained in India for almost two months have been allowed to return home. The St Vincent & Grenadines-registered Union Demeter had been held in the port of Haldia because of bunkering debts. The ship's crew were owed five months' wages, amounting to US\$218,000.

STENA DEAL: Sweden's Stena Bulk is set to take full control of the joint venture it operates with Weco Shipping after an agreement to buy the Danish company's 50% stake. Stena Weco operates a fleet of 65 ships, equally split between owned and chartered tonnage and involved in transporting chemical and edible oils, and clean petroleum products.

DRINK LAW: France is introducing new regulations to lower the alcohol limit for seafarers, aligning the rules with those for motorists and with the STCW Manila Amendments. The measures will apply to all French-flagged ships and will include foreign-flagged vessels operating in the country's territorial waters.

ASBESTOS APPEAL: French seafaring unions are pressing for improved compensation arrangements for members suffering from asbestos-related illness. In 2015, 15% of occupational diseases among seafarers were linked to asbestos, compared with 7.7% across the entire workforce.

MSC BID: the Swiss-Italian shipping firm MSC is seeking to acquire a major stake in the Italian operator Gruppo Messina, which runs a fleet of specialist ro-ro containerhips on routes linking the Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa.

RUBBISH RULE: China is to abolish a regulation that requires ocean-going vessels to dispose of any sludge and garbage onboard before departure from the country's ports.

Unions join forces on support scheme

Nautilus Federation members to provide mutual assistance for seafarers

➔ A trail-blazing scheme to provide mutual support for seafarers in trouble around the world was launched last month by 13 maritime unions belonging to the Nautilus Federation.

The Joint Assistance and Support Network (JASON) has been developed with the aim of combatting the criminalisation of the maritime profession and to ensure that members' rights to fair treatment after accidents are upheld.

The scheme unites unions in countries including the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Croatia, the United States, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

It will ensure that reciprocal advice and support can be provided to union members if they are involved in an incident within

a port, territory, territorial waters or onboard a vessel flagged in one of the countries covered by the agreement.

'We are delighted to launch the JASON scheme,' said Charles Boyle, Nautilus director of legal services. 'Criminalisation of seafarers has been a major concern for all the member unions in the Federation and we have worked hard to prevent seafarers from being treated as scapegoats after accidents.'

'As a result of such work, the IMO/ILO guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers following maritime incidents were developed and adopted in 2006,' Mr Boyle pointed out.

'However, the adoption of the guidelines in themselves was insufficient to ensure that seafarers are not victimised. All the Federation members report

some degree of criminalisation of members — most frequently involving pollution cases, as well as collisions — and we saw the need to develop further procedures to establish an international support and assistance network for the benefit of our respective members.'

The JASON scheme will provide concise and practical checklists for members to use if they are involved in an incident to raise awareness of their rights under the fair treatment guidelines. Additional helpline support will be delivered in conjunction with the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) — which already provides the Nautilus 24/7 service.

As part of the JASON agreement, Federation unions will provide assistance such as advice on choosing a local expert lawyer,

guidance on local investigation and legal procedures, visiting a member or arranging visits and translation services, and ensuring consular access to any members of other Federation unions who have been detained following incidents in their waters or on their national-flagged ships.

'The JASON scheme has been designed to address some of the biggest concerns faced by members at sea,' Mr Boyle said. 'It should ensure that they receive speedy and specialist support if they are involved in an incident in many parts of the world. We hope that this will not only provide practical assistance, but that it will also make sure that the principles of the fair treatment guidelines are upheld and that seafarers are not unjustly singled out for punishment following accidents.'

➔ ISWAN feature — see page 19.

Nordic alarm over ferry jobs threat

Swedish and Danish maritime unions fear that liberalisation of flag rules in Norway could lead to a loss of well-paid jobs in their countries.

Norwegian unions have already warned that up to 700 Norwegian jobs could be lost if the ferry firm Color Line goes ahead with plans to switch ships sailing between Denmark and Norway from the mainland register to the international flag, NIS.

Danish officers' union SL and Sweden's SEKO Sjöfolk think jobs outside Norway could be hit too. SL is concerned ferry companies such as DFDS and Fjordline could switch to NIS, while SL believes its members could also sail under NIS and that affected jobs would mostly be the lesser skilled ones.

SEKO leader Kenny Reinhold joined a day of protests outside the Norwegian parliament last month. 'We've had Swedish owners who've wanted to introduce something like

this in ferry traffic, with low-paid staff in their catering and hotel business,' he warned. 'We have to fight that.'

Unlike Norway and Denmark, Sweden only has one ship register and if ships reflagged it could have a profound effect on Swedish jobs, SEKO fears.

The Norwegian government has tabled a bill to put a net salary scheme for seafarers into law. It will repay owners' deductions for income tax and social security contributions, so long as they employ apprentices. The unions say it's still not enough, as owners will still be able to hire foreign crews to operate in Norwegian waters on cheaper NIS contracts.

Officers' union NSOF has called for the scheme to be widened to deepsea shipping, as well as seismic vessels. The subsidy limit applying to the offshore segment should be removed to help it recover from the collapse in oil prices, says the union.



DFDS newbuild boost

Pictured above being launched at the Flensburger yard in Germany is Gardenia Seaways — the first of two new 32,000gt freight ro-ro ferries being built for DFDS at the facility.

With the ability to carry up to 262 trailers and a load space of 4,076m, the two ships will increase the company's North Sea capacity by some 20%.

Gardenia Seaways is due to enter into service on the Immingham-Rotterdam route in May and the second vessel is set to be delivered in September.

'The volume on all routes within the DFDS network has grown noticeably, we are already using almost all the capacity available in our existing fleet,' said DFDS shipping division vice-president Peder Gellert.

'The two ships from the Flensburger yard will be joined in 2019 by another two ro-ro freight vessels — the largest freight vessels in the DFDS fleet so far,' he added. 'DFDS is also considering the future construction of new combined freight and passenger ships, and the replacement of passenger ships.'



A project is underway in Senegal to equip a training ship for students at the national maritime school in Senegal, pictured above. The vessel Diender was donated in 2015 to the Ecole Nationale de Formation Maritime (ENFM) in Dakar by the Korea Maritime Institute and the

Centre for Maritime Research and Cooperation Spain-Korea (CEIMARPE). With work on the conversion of the vessel now in its final phase, IMO maritime ambassador Captain Antonio Padrón and CEIMARPE director Dr Han Deuk Hoon visited students and trainers onboard last month.

Ukrainian wages row

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has condemned an offer by a small coalition of Ukrainian trade unions to slash minimum wages for the country's seafarers.

Describing itself as the Ukrainian National Platform of Maritime Trade Unions, the new group is touting for business by promising to undercut agreed and negotiated conditions. It is publicly offering shipowners the chance to evade the agreed ITF monthly minimum wage for ABs of

US\$1,806 and slashing it by US\$801.

ITF seafarers' section chair David Heindel commented: 'There is no indication that any shipowner has fallen for this offer yet. They will be aware that a union proposing to reduce negotiated conditions for seafarers is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the ITF. Similarly, the ITF will consider any shipowner trying to take advantage of this dodgy deal as attempting to attack the hard-won and hard-earned rights of seafarers — and inviting the consequences.'

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Stranded crew go home

The last of 117 Burmese, Ukrainian and Chinese crew members who were stranded on a cruiseship abandoned in Hong Kong since October last year returned home last month after unions helped to recover unpaid wages when the vessel was finally sold.

The Palau-flagged New Imperial Star had been operating as a floating casino in Hong Kong since 2013, and its crew alerted local unions and the International Transport Workers' Federation to unpaid wages, poor living conditions and shortages in fuel and provisions a year ago.

The 36-year-old ship was detained after failing post state control inspections, and union officials made repeated representations to persuade the Hong Kong-based managers to respond to recurring complaints of owed wages.

In February most of the Chinese casino workers and some of the Ukrainian officers were repatriated with full wages, leaving 46 seafarers on the ship. In April, they began legal action to recover their pay, with help from local unions and the ITF.



A Hong Kong maritime union official talks to crew members onboard the abandoned cruiseship New Imperial Star

The vessel was arrested and sold in August for US\$1.4m and union officials said that once court costs, port fees and other charges were met there was sufficient money remaining to settle the claims of the crew.

During their ordeal onboard the vessel, the crew members were provided with food and essential supplies by the three Hong Kong maritime unions and local welfare agencies.

'This is a really a good example showing how ITF inspectors and local unions assist the foreign seafarers in their port,' said Jason Lam Wai Hong, of the Hong Kong Merchant Navy Officers' Guild.

NZ skills shortage victory for union

Guild says immigration move should boost employment for local seafarers

New Zealand's Merchant Service Guild (MSG) has welcomed a decision by the country's immigration authorities to remove the occupations of 'ship's officer' and 'ship's master' from the national long-term skills shortage list.

The union says the move should pave the way for increased employment and training of New Zealand seafarers and it is working with owners and colleges in an effort to rebuild cadet courses in the country.

'This decision should mean that the current practice of denying qualified New Zealand ship

officers the jobs in their own waters will be ended,' said Guild president Russell Petrie. 'This is a win for members of the Guild who have been running a campaign since 2010. We are delighted that our campaign has been a success.'

Captain Petrie said the process of changing the skills shortage list had been 'unreasonably slow' and the Guild had to spend a long time producing evidence about the state of the local labour market, detailing current unsustainable employment practices, and the failure of the skills shortage list to incentivise training and local recruitment.

Calling for the review system to be overhauled, he said it had 'unnecessarily prolonged the hardship experienced by our unemployed members'.

The Guild is now putting together a work programme to fit with the new policy settings. This will include talks with employers on shifting to a model of career progression and succession as a way of managing the workforce, as well as discussions with ship owners to alleviate concerns about mobility within the industry, which is often incorrectly cited as a barrier to local recruitment.

'More than anything else this decision has given hope that there can be a bright future for New Zealand shipping, but Guild members and officials are now straight back to work in pursuit of a vibrant, well-regulated, and well-protected local industry,' Capt Petrie added.

'We will continue to push for a rejuvenated domestic coastal fleet and to support the greater maritime cluster. We need to ensure that the shortcomings in our freight network, which has been brutally exposed in the aftermath of the Kaikoura earthquakes, are not repeated.'

shortreports

AID ALARM: French unions have expressed alarm about a European court decision ordering France to recover €220m in 'state subsidies' given to the ailing Marseilles-based ferry operator SNCM when it was privatised in the mid-1990s. The General Court upheld a European Commission decision of May 2013 that compensation paid to SNCM and to CMN (Compagnie Méridionale de Navigation) for ferry services between Marseille and Corsica from 2007 to 2013 was incompatible state aid and must be repaid.

OFFICER EXTRADITED: an officer serving on a ship involved in a fatal collision with a fishing vessel off the French coast in 2007 has been extradited from Georgia after being held under an international arrest warrant. Aziz Mirzoyev, originally from Azerbaijan, was sentenced in absentia to three years in prison for involuntary manslaughter, leaving the scene and failing to aid a person in danger after the general cargo ship Ocean Jasper collided with the trawler Sokalique.

FEWER FILIPINOS: authorities in the Philippines have reported a 25% decline in the number of Filipino seafarers being deployed in the global shipping industry last year. Figures released by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency last month show that the number of Filipino seafarers working in the international fleet dropped from 406,531 in 2015 to 304,329 last year.

BRITTANY BOOST: the French operator Brittany Ferries has reported 'strong' passenger and freight figures for 2016. Passenger numbers were up 3% and freight volumes rose by 6.7%, with turnover increasing by 5.2% to €454.9m. The company said its continued confidence is demonstrated by plans to build its first LNG-powered ferry.

ELBE HOLD-UP: plans to deepen the River Elbe to accommodate ultra-large containerships may be delayed for up to two years following a court ruling in Germany. The federal administrative court approved controversial plans to dredge the busy waterway, on condition that a number of environmental safeguards are met.

FLAG MOVE: the Pacific island of Palau has switched its ship registry's head office from the United States to the Greek port city of Piraeus as part of an expansion plan. The Palau International Ship Registry was launched in 2010 and now claims to have several hundred vessels on its books.

DELIVERY DELAY: French containership firm CMA CGM has decided to delay the delivery of three new vessels after announcing a \$452m loss for 2016. The company said it was encouraged by the recent increase in freight rates and reported that it had made a \$45m profit in the fourth quarter.

CRUISESHIP HELD: the US Coast Guard detained Royal Caribbean's Bahamas-flagged cruiseship Majesty of the Seas in the port of Canaveral after an inspection revealed deficiencies in life-saving equipment.

'Fair pay' ruling in Australia

Nautilus has urged the UK authorities to take note of a case in which Australia's Fair Work Ombudsman recovered A\$100,649 (€72,183) for 10 Filipino seafarers who were underpaid while working in the country's waters.

The Ombudsman said the underpayments had taken place onboard an unnamed foreign-flagged ship which had been operating in the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between January and June 2016, sailing between ports in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

It said the crew members had been paid base salaries in accordance with international minimum rates and during the voyages. The lowest-ranked crew members received as little as A\$5 (€3.59) an hour.

However, it ruled, as the crew members were serving within Australian waters they should have been paid in line with Australian rates — which meant the lowest-ranked should have received at least A\$17.29 (€12.40) an hour.

The Ombudsman investigated the crew's wages after receiving a

complaint about the ship. The highest amount recovered for an individual crew member was A\$16,677 (€11,965).

The ship's operator — described as an international company with headquarters outside Australia — claimed that it was unaware of its obligations under Australian workplace laws because it had never operated voyages within the country's EEZ before.

It cooperated with inspectors and rectified the underpayments voluntarily, but it was issued with a formal letter of caution warning

that future breaches of Australian workplace laws may trigger enforcement action, including litigation.

Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson commented: 'The UK would do well to take note of such action. An increasing number of countries are acting to prevent abuses in their waters and to combat the damage caused by unfair competition from low-cost crewing policies. It's time the UK joined them, addressed the problems around our coast and promoted employment for UK seafarers.'

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MARITIME SAFETY

Civil aviation stirs mixed emotions within the maritime sector. It is often held up as a shining beacon of what the shipping industry could achieve if only it saw — and followed — the light. Others argue that such comparisons are unfair or inappropriate, or dismiss them as an overly simplistic parallel. The truth probably lies somewhere in between.

For aircraft, the direction of travel has always been towards standardised equipment, streamlined administration and procedures, and centralised traffic control — processes that instil a culture of safety permeating every level of activity.

However, the disappearance of flight MH370 serves as a reminder that the aviation industry has shortcomings of its own — not least its flawed approach to asset tracking. In shipping, AIS has proved a workable, industry-wide answer.

Nonetheless, shipping is most harshly judged against aviation when the discussion turns to human error and officer training. As is commonly acknowledged, around 80% of incidents and accidents in shipping are the result of either mistakes in performing a task, or a failure to take action to avoid an incident escalating. Accident investigations often reveal that a chain of small decisions or unobserved incidents leads to a larger one.

In a study carried out by H.P. Berg (2013), the maritime sector was found to be 25 times riskier than aviation, based on deaths per 100km travelled. The simple explanation is that airlines prioritise safety because their 'cargo' is predominantly human passengers. However, crew operating cargo planes have to adhere to the same training regime as those carrying people.

'Pilots must undergo a rigorous assessment every six months,' notes Frank Coles, former deck officer and now CEO of the digital maritime solutions company Transas. 'There is nothing close to this in maritime. I find that strange, given that a ship's captain takes the ultimate responsibility for delivering the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the fuel we burn and everything else we take for granted. It's almost as if the shipping industry lives in the shadows — behind a shield of invisibility.'

'My worry is this ghostly existence affects how shipping companies go about their business, trickling down as a lowest common denominator mentality in terms of the crew hired, the training they receive, the salaries they are paid and the respect they are given.'

Mr Coles believes there is a deep-rooted qualitative difference in the training philosophies pursued in the two sectors. 'In shipping, under SOLAS and STCW, the objective is certification. Once certificated, a deck or engineer officer can continue to work until revalidation is due five years later, which does not necessitate any refresher training. In aviation, the focus is on skills, competencies and continually honing their ability to react in emergency situations.'

Shipping companies are free to go beyond minimum requirements, but few see a compelling need to do so. 'While some cruise and offshore operators understand the value of long-term investment in crew development, there are unscrupulous

Importing safety practices from aviation isn't a panacea for the shipping industry's problems — but maritime technology company boss Frank Coles, a former seafarer, believes there are valuable opportunities to learn...



Transas CEO Frank Coles with CSMART MD Captain Hans Hederström at the opening of the CSMART/Arison Maritime Centre Picture: CSMART

Why we should stop and listen



The Carnival Group introduced the principles of 'operations director', navigator and co-navigator in its new approach to bridge operations Picture: CSMART

operators at the other end of the spectrum who choose to ignore suspect paperwork that was obtained on the streets of Manila or somewhere similar,' Mr Coles points out.

He cites Carnival as a good example of a ship operator which has successfully adapted lessons from aviation 'to an extraordinary degree' with a 'fascinating' training model. 'After the Costa Concordia, they spent a lot of time evaluating their bridge procedures,' he explains. 'They went and studied the practices used at American Airlines. They took these home and absorbed key elements into their bridge management and training systems.'

Carnival changed the role of the ship's captain. Instead of

leading from the front, they entrust the control the ship to their officers.

'This approach engenders trust in the team and gives the captain greatly enhanced situational awareness,' Mr Coles adds.

Counterintuitively, the more efficient the automated system, the more crucial the human contribution made by the operators, he observes. 'Humans are less involved, but their involvement becomes more critical.' This is

“After the Costa Concordia, Carnival studied practices at American Airlines, and have now successfully adapted their bridge procedures”

known as the paradox of automation, where an error in an automated system multiplies until either it is fixed or the system shuts down.

Transas is preparing for the challenges of this automatic future by positioning simulation training as one of the four legs of its Harmonised Eco System of Integrated Solutions (Thesis) concept.

'Simulator training is going to grow in importance as more and more routine aspects of vessel operation are automated,' Mr Coles argues.

Accident investigations have shown that a significant problem in shipping is the temptation to find 'workarounds' to standard operating procedures. Crew develop these behavioural adap-

tations to cope with unrealistic or impractical operational demands and challenges.

The most common workarounds relate to reporting paperwork, personal protective equipment, work-rest hours, and navigational rules.

Airlines are far less tolerant of deviations from accepted practice, and aberrations are more likely to be challenged or reported. However, it is also fair to point out that the aviation industry has targeted reducing administrative duties in the cockpit through automation, while no such claim can be made in shipping — in fact, the opposite trend prevails, with new regulation driving more paperwork required by the bridge.

Maritime needs to challenge itself to accept automated reporting and monitoring, Mr Coles suggests. Reducing the administrative burden on crews would have a significant positive impact on the ability to perform better.

Standardisation in the aviation sector has been massively encouraged by the fact that only two major suppliers build civil aircraft, while ships and their equipment come in all shapes and sizes. The competence of a ship's crew may sometimes depend on their exposure to a particular maker's equipment.

Marine equipment could be further standardised, making user interfaces easier to understand and more consistent, Mr Coles suggests. This would lessen the time spent by crew on 'familiarisation', make training more 'portable', and cut the risk of operator error. All this points to safer operation, he argues.

Mr Coles says the aviation sector's coordinated approach to traffic control systems provides the most telling opportunity to enhance maritime safety culture. Air traffic control, after all, is acknowledged as pivotal to the safety of the skies and to smooth take-offs and landings.

'ATC can see situations develop more quickly than an air pilot relying on visual sighting or his instrumentation,' the Transas CEO explains. 'While ships move at a more sedate speed, the fact remains that the majority of collisions and incidents happen in busy shipping lanes and ports relatively close to land, so increased maritime traffic control and management could have a significant impact on safety.'

Transas already installs vessel traffic monitoring infrastructure around the world, from simple radar apparatus to full coastline management solutions covering half a dozen ports. But Mr Coles suggests other drivers are already nudging maritime towards a more coordinated vessel management future. With geopolitical concerns rising, coastal states are likely to take a keener interest in monitoring and managing the passage of all ships through their territorial waters, he contends.

'Flag states will be apprehensive about increased traffic in unmanned and drone ships passing through their economic waters — whatever their size — without knowing where they're from and what they might be carrying. It seems logical to me that a government wishing to protect its waters will make the jump from monitoring to a desire for control.'

Live and listening 24/7

Got a problem? Whatever it is, and wherever you are, Nautilus can help — day or night. ANDREW LININGTON meets the team behind the Union's round-the-clock helpline service...

The London borough of Croydon doesn't have many claims to fame — but on the third floor of one of the office blocks in its business centre an increasingly important service is helping to raise the standard of maritime welfare services for the world's seafarers.

The building is home to the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) — a charity which works to promote the effective application of the Maritime Labour Convention standards and to deliver practical support for seafarers and their families.

And, since July 2014, it has also been the home to Nautilus 24/7 — a special service that offers a round-the-clock helpline to Union members using Live Chat instant messaging, freephone calls from 45 different countries, SMS texts, emails and Skype.

'We launched 24/7 in recognition of the working lives of our members and the fact that incidents and emergencies can occur at any time,' says Nautilus head of legal services Charles Boyle. 'The service means that members can have constant access to our specialist support if they run into difficulties, wherever they might be in the world.'

“We provide emotional as well as practical support”

The service is provided by the ISWAN team that is also responsible for the industry-wide SeafarerHelp service — the free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families.

'What is important is that, if you are a member and something goes wrong at work, you contact Nautilus 24/7 out of office hours and you won't have to wait until the next day to get help,' says head of operations Ray Barker.

'Knowing that the problem is being dealt with and that something is happening makes a massive difference in such circumstances,' he points out. 'It is invaluable for a seafarer to be able to call in and speak to someone at any time rather than having to leave a message and hope it will be picked up.'

Members calling Nautilus 24/7 will receive immediate advice or assistance — and in the case of an emergency, the SeafarerHelp team will contact a senior Nautilus official who can provide specialist support on legal, industrial or professional and technical issues.

As an example of the service, Mr Boyle highlights a recent case in which a Dutch member contacted 24/7 on a Saturday afternoon after being told he was facing a disciplinary hearing on the Monday. 'We were able to give support and guidance, to get the hearing delayed and to have the matter dealt with properly,' he explains.

Another case handled by the service involved members onboard the superyacht Ocean Victory following a fatal accident off the coast of Thailand last year. 'The crew were given a huge amount of reassurance by being able to get immediate advice and support in a very difficult situation,' says Mr Barker. Since it was launched, Nautilus 24/7 has assisted



ISWAN helpline manager Chester Quintal and head of operations Ray Barker with Nautilus director of legal services Charles Boyle

more than 560 seafarers and, on average, it is handling around 20 cases a month.

Some of the most common queries being raised via 24/7 are members asking about a new contract or issues with disciplinary procedures. Other frequent topics include membership enquiries, medical and health problems, unfair dismissal, and personal injury compensation.

Nautilus holds regular meetings with the ISWAN staff running the 24/7 service, and officials from the Union have also provided training sessions on subjects such as STCW convention requirements, SOLAS and MARPOL. In February and March, Mr Boyle is to provide further training on the new Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) amendments.

The SeafarerHelp team already has a comprehensive training programme for 2017 which is focused on providing practical support to seafarers and their families and includes training on dealing with vulnerable callers, and providing emotional support, as well as visits to ports.

The Nautilus 24/7 scheme — which is now being extended to members of the Nautilus Federation through the Joint Assistance and Support Network (JASON) — builds on almost 20 years of experience amassed by SeafarerHelp. With 10 team members speaking 12 languages fluently and having a knowl-

edge of many more dialects, figures show that in 2015 the service was contacted from 129 countries and supported seafarers of 86 different nationalities.

In recent years SeafarerHelp has handled a marked rise in requests for support — up from 715 cases involving 3,065 seafarers in 2011 to 3,073 cases involving 11,228 seafarers last year.

'It's certainly clear that seafarers have been paying the price of the industry downturn,' says Mr Barker. 'You can see from the statistics how crew members are affected by cost-cutting, with a 37% increase in the number of cases in 2016.'

SeafarerHelp is also becoming increasingly involved with providing emotional support to seafarers and their families. 'We've done this since day one, but we are now doing it in a more cognitive way, with staff trained in counselling skills awareness and in the provision of emotional support, which is really important,' Mr Barker says.

'We recognise that when someone calls to say they haven't been paid for six months, it's not just that one issue that is the problem. Behind it there is lots of stress and depression because it creates major concerns about how their family at home is managing to cope with not receiving any allotments,' he explains, 'and so we now deal with these things in a

different way, and if there are really significant problems we can arrange for a counsellor to come in on the case.'

There's a growing focus on psychological problems of seafarers, with expert analysis of anonymised SeafarerHelp cases providing insight into the problems they face. This has supported SeafarerHelp in shaping its services to meet the changing needs of seafarers.

In one recent incident, SeafarerHelp arranged for a counsellor to provide assistance to a Filipino stewardess onboard a cruiseship after she was sexually abused by a passenger. 'In such situations the victim will need to be helped as soon as possible to get through the ordeal they have experienced,' Mr Barker points out.

Advances in IT and communications have certainly helped to improve service delivery. Since 2011, internet based methods of communication such as email, LiveChat and Facebook have risen to dominate the methods used to contact SeafarerHelp, while in contrast, telephone calls have fallen from 40% of contacts to just 21%.

'I do think we provide a really good service to seafarers and their families,' Mr Barker says. 'Shipping has always been a macho industry with an attitude of just getting on with things. But it can be a difficult way of life, there is a very real need for what we do and the support we give.'

Mr Barker worked in housing services for more than 30 years before he started in his current role with ISWAN. He's a board member of the Helplines Partnership, an organisation which represents organisations providing such services to the public.

SeafarerHelp isn't all unpaid wages or contract problems, however. Mr Barker adds. 'We also get some unusual requests — recently getting a call to ask when the iPhone 7 comes out and one where a recently-married seafarer called to ask what present he should get his wife when he returns home from sea. The SeafarerHelp team will try and help with anything.'

To contact Nautilus 24/7:

- **Telephone** — there are two helpline numbers, an international toll free number **+800 247 00365** or **+44 208 530 1646**, which will incur a charge.
- **Email** — helpline@nautilus247.org
- **Live Chat** — Nautilus members can access Live Chat through the Union's website
- **SMS text** — **07860 017 119**
- **Skype** — Nautilus-247



Helpline staff members Yasmine Zhao and Karin Bayona

MARITIME WELFARE



Is this the future for providing seafarers with reliable access to internet services in port? The ITF Seafarers' Trust has revealed details of a pilot project to test the feasibility of special 'communication pods' for visiting crews.

The pods are portable 20ft containers that give seafarers wi-fi access, tablet consoles and furniture to rest on. They are designed to be powered by solar panels, making them energy-efficient and viable for areas lacking in existing infrastructure.

ITF affiliate unions have been invited to submit business plans to trial the first portable communication pods over a 12-month monitoring and evaluation period.



Connecting with crews

Access to shore-based welfare facilities is a key component in the Maritime Labour Convention. New research for the ITF Seafarers' Trust has examined how crews view such services, finding out whether their expectations match the reality. **JASON ZUIDEMA** of the North American Maritime Ministries Associations (NAMMA) considers the results and their potential impact on the future of seafarer welfare work...



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The ITF Seafarers' Trust released a report in February on the quality of shore-based seafarers' welfare drawn from data gathered between July 2015 and February 2016. This report builds on data from similar reports in 1996 and 2006 done in collaboration with the Seafarers International Research Centre of Cardiff University and other partners.

The new research compares data from 957 seafarers. It was collected using an online survey circulated via social media by seafarers' welfare associations and other industry groups.

The report's findings are valuable and telling. Though interest in international phone call services has tapered off slightly in the past few years, the desire for a strong internet connection ranked at the top of the list: 90% of respondents considered access to the internet to be the most important port-based service available.

Indeed, even this high number is probably under-reported due to the nature of the survey's distribution and response mechanisms: the report's findings were based disproportionately on officers, who typically have more access to the internet than other members of the crew.

Though demand for internet access is up from 2006, availability for crews is still lower than what might have been expected over the intervening decade. In the new survey, 26% of respondents noted that unlimited internet was available onboard their ship, 46% said internet was available, but limited to email with no attachments, and a final 28% said no internet was available.

The lack of internet onboard is accentuated by limited shore leave. The survey showed that 30% of seafarers had had no shore leave in the four weeks previous to completing the survey; another 35% had only been ashore once in that same period. As may have been expected, respondents noted that short turnaround times are a major factor in the lack of shore leave.

Other sections of the survey sampled perceptions of the availability and quality of shore-based seafarers' centres and visits from port welfare workers. These results are highly significant for the future of seafarers' welfare work.

Given the choice of visiting a seafarers' centre with free wi-fi or a cafe/bar with the same amenity, almost twice as many respondents said they would prefer the seamen's club. Respondents were also appreciative of port welfare workers' visits to their ships, although 40% of respondents said that they had not had a visit during their current contract.

And while demand for phone cards is decreasing, access to high-speed internet is a near universal desire among seafarers today.

Two other findings merit close consideration by maritime ministries. First, when respondents provided the name of a welfare organisation from which a visitor had come, the report notes that

there 'were repeated instances of confusing one organisation with another'.

Read one way, this is discouraging: some seafarers do not know which organisations are supporting their welfare. On the other hand, seafarers' welfare workers should question whether it really matters whether crews know the difference between the Mission to Seafarers, Sailors' Society, Apostleship of the Sea and other groups. Indeed, this may even be a positive finding – indicating, perhaps, that seafarers' welfare centres have been so effective at working together that seafarers see them as united rather than divided.

Second, although 'chaplaincy services' (i.e. access to someone to provide religious guidance) were only considered important by about 40% of respondents, almost all of that 40% considered the quality of the service to be good.

“Seafarers still appreciate access to free wi-fi in port. 46% of those surveyed said their shipboard internet access was limited to email with no attachments, and 28% had no internet access at all”

In fact, 'chaplaincy services' ranked as the service that most closely corresponded to user expectations. This is contrasted with the wider gaps between perceived importance and quality in transportation and internet access, the two services most in demand.

As with confusion over organisational identities, maritime ministries should consider these results closely. Are seafarers less selective about chaplains? Or are chaplains, when available, generally doing a great job? The report suggests more research might be done to understand this finding.

NAMMA would like to thank the ITF Seafarers' Trust and all those who participated in the survey for the timely research and the useful report. Find out more at: www.seafarerstrust.org.