I was extremely proud to take part in the Futurenautics Maritime launch event of the 2018 Crew Connectivity Survey. It was a fantastic event and I was honoured that the project had been co-ordinated and supported by InterManager members. Well done to everyone involved in this important survey to create data that benefits the whole industry. Working together as an industry is what will make shipping sustainable and successful in the future.

Our crews are at the very heart of this and I hope you enjoy this issue that focuses on how we, as an industry, can work together to support them. You can read more on the report on pages 10-11.

InterManager is very pleased to be working with a former seafarer who struggled with alcohol addiction for many years while he worked out a sea. He now sees a real opportunity to set up an online group for active seafarers who maybe suffering with similar afflictions. We would be very interested to hear our members’ thoughts on whether alcoholism is a big problem for seafarers. See his story on pages 2 to 5 and let us know what you think.

We have also been supporting Solent University, which has been carrying out a mentoring survey to find out what mentoring support seafarers receive at sea. You can read about this on pages 8 and 9.

Holiday season is just around the corner but before we jet off on our holidays, we have the high season of conferences, seminars and meetings that rule the months of April, May and June.

Our members actively participated in the recent Crew Connect gathering in Hamburg.

First of all – Do we really see a shortage of seafarers? Our members were pretty vocal – ‘no we have plenty of seafarers but we might have a problem with Owners willing to pay for them,’ they believe. We also have a continuous problem with educating young maritime professionals, as berths available for Junior Officers and Cadets are very limited. We all agreed that this is not sustainable and will create a serious problem for manpower at sea.

Secondly, the very important subject of stable or fluid crew was discussed and almost everyone in the room agreed they are happier to work with a team they know and have worked with in the past. However, this is not the norm for seafarers who are being rotated frequently by the majority of the Ship Managers and Operators to meet Owners’ requirements.

Obviously the subject of unmanned ships is the latest flavour of the month and we would be really hard pushed to find any conference that does not include this subject. In Hamburg we discussed it as well and agreed that these ships are coming but also that we will have a long, long way before we will see unmanned ships employed in the international trade.

We also discussed shore personnel needs and requirements, and almost everyone agreed that the gap between shore and sea salaries is growing, making it pretty challenging to find Senior Officers willing to join shore teams. While there is a lot of training provided for seafarers there is very little done by shore personnel. This has been identified as a serious shortcoming of our industry.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and wishing you a productive Summer ahead.
Employers worldwide recognize AA as a valuable asset for retaining employees who have alcohol or substance abuse problems. The former seafarer who asked to be known only as Brett V, has been sober for over eight years and is hoping to set up the support group through Skype to enable crew members to come together once a week to discuss their issues with one another in confidence.

Following the Sailors’ Society Wellness At Sea Conference in March, Brett was inspired by the discussions on mental health and wellbeing of crew members. Brett, having over 15 years’ experience of sea time, would like to reach out to help others and form an online group for those facing alcoholism and other addictions.

“I was drinking heavily off the ships, but during my quiet time at sea was the only time I really thought about it and I had nobody to talk to, as most of us sailors back then were taught to be tough men who didn’t discuss their problems as they didn’t want to show any weakness.

“Although it was hard to get alcohol on a ship, most of the time I would drink very heavily when we were in port, sober up for when we went back on the ship and I would usually get away with smuggling a bottle or two back onto the ship that would see me through for a little while,” Brett explained.
The former US Merchant Marine Officer began his career in 1978 as a Cadet. He sailed in the Deck Department from Cadet to Able Seaman, Bosun Mate, NY Harbor ferryboat Captain and Third Mate on 20 different vessels.

He added: “On the ship I was mostly sober although I do recall that other people didn’t do as much of a good job of that. In many cases it was the Senior Officers who were doing it, so there were no repercussions for them. I feel that my disease manifested itself off the ship.”

Brett says that he managed to keep his dependence on alcohol under control for many of the years that he worked at sea, only turning to alcohol when he was off the ship and always maintaining professionalism when he was back onboard.

But as his untreated alcoholism eventually took a greater hold of Brett, it all came to a head after 15 years at sea when he signed off a ship, couldn’t stop drinking and did not go back onboard when he was scheduled to. Subsequently, Brett lost his job, his home and disrupted his family relations.

After he had lost everything important to him, and had been off the ships for two years, he had a moment of clarity and quit drinking. He maintains his connections with AA and has now been sober for more than eight years. He retired and settled with his wife in the UK where he is active in local AA and community services.

Brett is looking for people to come forward who may be interested in either taking part or helping to organise the support group. He would like to call on other seafarers like him who are now sober and can offer support to those currently facing a drinking problem or other addiction issues.

“I think things have improved for crews, there is better awareness of the emotional and mental issues seafarers have to deal with. With connectivity increasing on ships every year, there is a real opportunity to alleviate the problems of feeling you have no one to talk to. Connectivity can only help crew members and is a means to offer support while they are out at sea,” Brett said.

He wrote the following article on his hopes to help others who are struggling with alcohol and addiction problems while at sea and ashore.

“What shall we do with a drunken sailor? Give him the hair of the dog that bit him or put him in the longboat until he’s sober? Sailors and alcohol have long been intertwined in fact and in fiction as far back as one can go in the history of sailing. Shanties and sea stories are illustrated profusely with the exploits, both serious and humorous, of drunken seaman and Captains alike.

“I am sure everyone who has experienced more than one Booze can transform a marlinspike seaman into a drunken sot and a danger to all around him or her, and a professional maritime officer into a hazard on the high seas putting both ship and crew at risk

Brett V
trans-oceanic crossing has a recollection of a past shipmate who imbibed too much ashore or brought their bottle back onboard and continued tippling long after the coastal lights sunk below the horizon. Perhaps you have experienced him (or her); maybe just a little shot at coffee break to ease the pain of the last port’s overindulgence, a pick-me-up before overtime, a midnight hit to break the monotony that eventually transforms into a bottle on lookout, on bridge watch, in the engine room or galley, stashed in a fire station, or a locker in their cabin.

Booze can transform a marlinspike seaman into a drunken sot and a danger to all around him or her, and a professional maritime officer into a hazard on the high seas putting both ship and crew at risk. These stories are all of the past, you may say, the onboard bars are gone, dry ships are the norm, owner’s zero-tolerance policy, international regulations, flag state laws have all reduced the incidents to practically nil, you may confidently boast that we have outlawed drinking at sea. Three years ago an incident occurred where a bulk carrier ran aground at full speed, not on a hidden shoal or reef, but a rather large piece of land called Scotland. The collision resulted in 25 tonnes of marine gas being spilled and the ship was eventually scrapped - a total loss. The Chief Officer was alone on the mid-watch having sent the AB to the ship’s office and had consumed a large amount of rum after receiving a distressing phone call earlier that evening.

I do not bring up this accident to point a finger at anyone or any policy but to point out that a drinking sailor will always find a way to get his stash onboard, if there is more than one then it is virtually impossible to prevent booze from being brought aboard a ship. This is sometimes at the cost of an entire vessel and the local environment but more frequently a seaman’s health, both physical and mental and even, human life.

There is a grey area that exists in reporting incidents, one that is not verifiable by instruments such as breathalysers or blood analysis, but an area of concern nonetheless and an area that allows incidents not to be reported as alcohol or drug-involved. The disappearance of a crew member at sea cannot be confirmed as suicide or as under the influence of alcohol or drugs without other corroborating evidence. However, neither can an alcoholic crew member who is dry and tested as clean, but is alcoholically depressed, anxious, or otherwise suffering from the effects of untreated alcoholism
and is involved in an incident, be categorised under the alcohol/drug label.

The AMO union, the largest union of maritime officers in the US, reported in 2015 that 75% of license suspensions and revocations are due to alcohol or drugs. Even with the plethora of various societies, missions, churches and services available to help a sailor in port, and the treatment facilities that are available through unions and major insurers, the question begs: What can be done to keep a sober seafarer sober at sea and from relapsing on the beach? And what of the seemingly competent mariner, who disappears from the proverbial radar? Who vanish into their bottles while ashore never to return to sea, losing not only their careers but, for many, their lives to pursue that thirst that can never be quenched?

With less and less port time, there is a need for assistance onboard vessels that is only now becoming available to a working maritime employee and that is online assistance through internet access.

Here is where the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous can be of great assistance to those mariners who, having found their way into sobriety ashore, are able to continue that path while at sea by the use of online meetings.

The history of Alcoholics Anonymous dates back to 1935 and its association with seafarers almost as far. In World War II, Captain Jack S, skipper of a Socony Vacuum oil tanker, had found sobriety and planted the AA seed in foreign parts throughout the world for many years thereafter.

His contacts with the co-founder of AA, Bill W led to a correspondence service (snail mail) called the Internationalist Seafarers Group in 1949. Also, in Manhattan, an early clubhouse was turned over to merchant seaman back when the docks were located there. AA today counts over two million in the fellowship with meetings in over 150 countries.

To the maritime community at large, we are now signalling an SOS, Save Our Sober Seafarers! To those who are in either the fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or know of a current or former shipmate, active or retired and wants to be a part of an online fellowship of sober seafarers supporting other seafarers, please contact me and we will get this ship built and ready for sea.

It is time to raise the gangway on drinking and drugs, though physical intervention has alleviated some of the problem, conscious contact through solution-based programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous will provide the mental and emotional support for a long term solution.

Brett can be contacted at: molokailight@gmail.com
By the time you read this article on the IMO, the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 99) will be coming to the end of its marathon eight working day meeting, and will also no doubt have crowned a worthy champion at the annual MSC golf championship during the intervening weekend. All work and no play... You will, as usual, be able to read an accurate summary of the meeting proceedings which will be posted by the Secretary-General, but as a reminder, here are a few of the most important topics considered:

- Amendments to mandatory instruments;
- Measures to enhance maritime security;
- Regulatory scoping exercise for the use of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS);
- Reports of the six Sub-Committees;
- Implementation of the STCW Convention;
- Piracy and armed robbery against ships, and;
- Unsafe mixed migration by sea.

Looking ahead over the next couple of months, a further three meetings will be convened, commencing with that of the Facilitation Committee (FAL 42). This will take place from 5th to 8th June and will include the following items of interest to InterManager Members:

- Application of single-window concept and updating the guidelines for setting up a single window system in addition to authentication, integrity and confidentiality of content for the purpose of exchange;
- Review and revision of the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business;
- Unsafe mixed migration by sea;
- Consideration and analysis of reports and information on persons rescued at sea and stowaways; and
- Technical cooperation activities related to facilitation of maritime traffic.

The IMO Council meets for its 120th session during the first week of July when it will consider a wide range of items amongst which are:

- Strategy, planning and reform of the Organisation;
- Resource management related to IMO Staff regulations and rules, also consideration of the financial report and audited statements together with budget considerations;
- The IMO Member State Audit scheme;
- Consideration of reports by the five committees, namely FAL, LEG, MEPC, MSC, and TCC;
- Reports by the World Maritime University and the International Maritime Law Institute; and
- Protection of vital shipping lanes.

The final meeting before the summer break in August will be that of the Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW 5) from 16th to 20th July. Discussions will include:

- Validated model training courses;
- Reports on unlawful practices associated with certificates of competency;
- Guidance for STCW Code;
- Role of the Human Element;
- Revision of the Guidelines on Fatigue;
- New guidelines for safe mooring operations in all ships; and
- Measures to harmonise Port State Control (PSC) activities and procedures worldwide.

Wishing you all a good couple of months, in either hemisphere.

May/June 2018 / InterManager Dispatch Issue 24 /5
Launching a seafaring career can be an emotional rollercoaster for some young Cadets. One minute feeling that first buzz of excitement of being out at sea for the first time and the next being filled with intrepid nerves of putting what they have learnt in the classroom into practice on a ship. Adding this to the daunting realisation of being away from family for a long period of time and all whilst learning their craft in the most practical way possible. The psychological pressure is immense.

Worrying statistics emerged earlier this year showing that a quarter of all seafarers show signs of depression and many won’t ask for help, according to a recent mental health study carried out by the Sailors’ Society and Yale University. Is mental ill health just a consequence of being away from loved ones for months on end or, as an industry, is there something we can do to support seafarers – shipping’s most valuable asset.

InterManager has been working with Solent University, helping to collect data for its one-year study to investigate the level of mentoring support there currently is available to seafarers.

The Mentoring Seafarers Team at Solent University is collaborating with Nautilus International and has been sponsored by the ITF Seafarers’ Trust in a year-long investigation into mentoring schemes currently running in the Merchant Navy. They are collecting views and participation from seafarers, managers and employers about what is working, what is not and what could be modelled as ‘best practice’. The research team includes Project Lead, Dr Kate Pike, Research Officer, Sarah Honebon, and Senior Lecturer Sue Harland from the Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering at Solent University.

Ms Honebon, who has 17 years’ sailing experience on high speed craft and conventional ferries, discusses why mentoring should be readily available for seafarers in this article.

“IT is reported that only 25% of knowledge is gained and retained from classroom type tuition, leaving a 75% void in comprehension once seafarer certification has been issued.

Not only are seafarers likely to be green behind the gills as they master the art of riding the waves, but they are liable to be green behind the ears as well. So where does that leave us when we are low on crew numbers and we need a body to fill the space to ease the fatigue on all crew members? An extra pair of hands onboard can make such a difference to morale and workloads. But what is the risk factor?

The knowledge gap, arguably a self-induced industry critique, where goal posts for qualifying time for certification and experience required at sea were moved just a few fleeting years ago. Short term goals were certainly achieved allowing eligible crew to move into essential watch-keeping positions. However, it would appear that this decision gave only an interim solution to ensure the shipping industry’s operational wheels kept turning, disputably leaving the root issues of manning, attraction and retention in place. Debatably worse given the capitalistic pursuit of globalised consumerism, meaning more and more ships at sea chasing the profit margin for goods and vacations.

So how do we plug that knowledge gap?

Mentoring is described as the ‘vehicle’ to allow knowledge and experience to be shared in a trusted relationship. It has a two-way function supporting personal growth in both career advancement and welfare in equal measures with role modelling an integral part. It has been used for centuries with Greek foundations and multiple applications and opinions to its use and success. Primarily it is seen as a tool related to occupational development, but as the human element in shipping is recognised more and more, occupational health is clearly a focus.

Human beings are not infallible or indestructible, either mentally and physically, and there are rather more testing circumstances to consider when working at sea than in a regular 9-5 job.

Occupational health describes the anticipation of job-related injuries and illnesses with a primary focus on the term ‘prevention’. Prevention means stopping something happening and thinking ahead, considering unnecessary gaps in terms of preventable circumstances or error. Interestingly, ‘prevention’ is a term repeatedly used in section 4.3 of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 which relates to health and safety protection and accidents.
Questionably an ambiguous term within policy that allows shipping companies to work between the lines without any real expectations.

Mentoring holds that transitional ability and the engagement of the term ‘prevention’. Used in terms of seafarer welfare it describes the psychosocial element of employment, referring in this case to the mental, social and emotional stability of crew members.

The term psychosocial questions collectively whether crew can cope with the psychological and physical separation from their social and family norms to endure the unpredictable work environment at sea for what can be long periods of time. A mentoring relationship has the ability to craft that resilience by offering a reservoir of personal and relative resources to equip people in the transition from shore to ship.

It is unlikely that amendments for certification qualification will change, so modifications to management strategies are needed to counter the challenges faced by the shipping industry in terms of training and retention. ‘Head in the sand’ and short term approaches clearly have not worked as we face substantial shortages and do not meet the objectives for the term ‘prevention’.

To deal with the status quo, shipping companies should be looking at long term management tactics and schemes. Being evermore reliant on sponsorship companies to fill places or welfare charities to take the lead on mental health issues should not be considered preventative or pro-active. Papering cracks and ticking proverbial management boxes does not address the root issues and will mean the green crevices of inexperience will only widen.

Mentoring is an excellent tool to ensure personnel feel supported and valued in pressured times, and particularly times where there is a shortage of seafarers. However, if the situation remains void of proactive management then the gaps will grow beyond repair and paper will no longer be a material of choice. In summary, and to use an analogy from Ragin and Kram (1995), ‘if the garden is not fed, it will not grow.”
Crew Connectivity

75% of Seafarers Now Using Internet At Sea

Connectivity at sea is today more available than ever and young seafarers entering the industry are looking to work for employers with good internet access.

In 2012 InterManager member Futurenautics Maritime launched the Crew Connectivity survey, a questionnaire designed to gather data on seafarers’ thoughts on connectivity at sea. The 2018 survey was launched with support from InterManager and its members KVH Industries, Alpha Navigation, PTC and ISWAN.

The latest survey revealed that 75% of seafarers can now use the internet at sea.

The report is based on a survey of 6,000 serving seafarers, the largest sample to date to complete the wide-ranging questionnaire covering onboard attitudes to the digital transformation sweeping the industry.

Since the survey was first launched in 2012, the number of seafarers that can now use the internet onboard ships has increased by 32%, which is actually over half a million more crew than that of six years ago.

Roger Adamson, Futurenautics Maritime’s Chief Executive Officer, introduced the report by explaining: “When I first developed the questionnaire for the original Crew Communications survey back in 2012 I was optimistic that the responses were going to provide data of real value. However, I never envisaged that by 2018 it would become the definitive source of information and analysis for the industry.

“In 2012 the overwhelming interest was in communications in the context of crew welfare, but since then, as the digital revolution has gathered pace and the industry has acknowledged the pivotal enabling role connectivity plays in every aspect of their operations, the question-set has expanded.”
As the scope of the survey had broadened we are now collecting unique data around cyber security and resilience and, in addition this year, also data about crew’s attitudes to a range of technologies from artificial technologies to unmanned ships and their likely impact on their prospects in the future.

Mr Adamson credited the industry for its support. He concluded: “The Crew Connectivity Survey is a wonderful example of something created for the industry, by the industry and we are extremely proud to be part of it. It may have Futurenautics Maritime on the cover but it belongs to you.”

The report’s findings show a change in mindset among seafarers regarding many aspects of connectivity. Among the key findings:

- 92% of seafarers reported that Internet access strongly influences their decision on where to work, up from 78% in prior years.
- 95% of seafarers view connectivity as having a positive effect on onboard safety, an increase of 72% since the 2015 survey.
- 69% of respondents view the increasing use of big data and analytics as a positive opportunity for their jobs in the next five years, versus 17% who see it as a threat.

“This is an extremely exciting time for the maritime industry, as digitalisation begins to transform ship operations and open up many opportunities to keep this industry vital,” said Martin Kits van Heyningen, KVH’s Chief Executive Officer. “We are delighted to support this report, which reinforces the importance of connectivity and how it is changing the life of the individual seafarer.”

The report also highlighted that due to increased connectivity onboard, seafarers are using welfare facilities in ports less. The number of crew members accessing these services has fallen to 20% and the number of ratings using them has fallen from 28% to just 15%.

“But where one need may be decreasing others are emerging. Welfare organisations, many of which lent valuable support to this survey, can learn much from this data about what those new needs are and how to work with new partners and in new ways to meet them for seafarers in the future,” Mr Adamson explained in the report.

The survey also revealed that, alarmingly, more than half of respondents had seen at least one element of their role automated in the last two years and of those, 98% reported that it had a positive impact. Across a wide range of technologies, seafarers were universally positive about their introduction, with the exception of unmanned ships. This was the only technology which a majority of respondents were not positive about, although 38% of seafarers still viewed unmanned ships as an opportunity.

InterManager worked with Futurenautics to publicise the survey.

Kuba Szymanski, General-Secretary of InterManager commented: “I would like to praise Futurenautics on the project that can be used by the whole industry to assess crew connectivity and seafarers’ attitudes towards it. I am very pleased that many of our members threw their support behind the initiative. The launch event of the survey was fantastic and it was very heartening to see the industry working together on this.”
Ecochlor Announces Completion of Contract to Retrofit 36 Vessels

USA-based ballast water treatment system (BWTS) manufacturer, Ecochlor, Inc. has announced the completion of a contract to retrofit 36 vessels, including Suezmaxes, Aframaxes, VLCCs, Minicapes and Capes for Angelicoussis Shipping Group Limited (ASGL).

Installations are expected between 2018 – 2020 in Singapore, Dubai, Qatar and China.

Greek-owned company ASGL has a well-established track record in shipping dating back to 1947. The Angelicoussis Group fleet is comprised of bulk carriers, tankers and LNG vessels. Maran Tankers Management (MTM) manages the Oil Tanker Shipping unit and in 2001 Anangel Maritime Services Inc. (AMSI) was appointed to manage the Bulk Carrier fleet of ASGL.

Maran Tankers Management provides world-class ship management services and aims to adhere to the highest health, safety, and environmental standards. The safety of their crew, cargo loss prevention and reduction in emissions is of paramount importance as they pursue these goals. Choosing a BWTS with low power consumption and a minimal environmental footprint, along with providing a safe, easy-to-operate option for their crew were critical factors in reaching this decision.

There are many things Anangel considered when selecting the BWTS for their fleet. After a thorough review, the features and benefits of the Ecochlor BWTS, along with a commitment to customer service and ensuring the compliance of Anangel vessels were important factors in their choice. With this decision, Anangel has taken important steps necessary to move forward in their commitment to comply with the BWM Convention for their fleet of vessels, thus reinforcing their continued environmental responsibilities in keeping the oceans and coastal waterways clean.

“We look forward to working with both Maran and Angangel to retrofit their fleet of vessels and continuing to support their efforts in satisfying regulatory compliance. Our BWTS are setting the standard in the ballast water treatment industry for operational performance and reliability,” said Tom Perlich, President of Ecochlor.

Ecochlor CEO Steve Candito remarked, “Having both IMO and USCG Type Approval were very important factors in the selection process by ASGL. Our expertise as well as the system’s ease of use and reliability are critical issues to shipowners as they look for manufacturers that are absolutely committed to making sure their vessels are in compliance with BWT regulations now, and for the life of the vessel.”

Latest BWM Updates
USCG Updates

On April 24th, an updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document was published by the USCG. Updates involve minor wording clarifications as well as additional guidance for topics such as:

A. Obtaining recognition for a vessel’s potable water system as a U.S. Public Water system (PWS);
B. Compliance waivers for discharge of unmanaged ballast water; and
C. Vessel compliance date extensions.

The USCG announced it is currently seeking public comments on proposed amendments to the 2018 Annual Reporting requirements for ballast water management that applies to vessels operating exclusively within a single Captain of the Port Zone. Public comments are due no later than June 8, 2018.

Annual Port State Control Report:

The USCG has published its 2017 Annual Port State Control Report, which contains a wealth of information on Port State Control (including statistics by region and port), Safety Compliance Performance, and Security Compliance Performance. Ballast water management (BWM) compliance is covered in Chapter 2, Safety Compliance Performance. The USCG reported that BWM exams increased by 1.9% during 2017; however, the number of deficiencies increased by 99.1% (110 in 2016 to 219 in 2017). Primarily, the deficiencies involved the BWM plan, alternate management system (AMS), logs/records and discharge of untreated ballast water into US waters. Operational control restrictions were imposed on 17 vessels and some were required to leave port in order to comply. The sanctions ranged from warnings, Notices of Violation (NOV), and Administrative Civil Penalty (Class I) for these vessels.
We’re really pleased that we will be supporting more students to develop their careers at the World Maritime University over the next five years and strengthen the maritime sector around the world.

Seafarers UK
We’re very excited to be registered with @amazonsmile! If you’re an #Amazon customer, simply switch to http://smile.amazon.co.uk and we will receive a donation from every purchase you make at no cost to you. #AmazonSmile #Seafarers

Sailors’ Society
Somewhere over the (double) rainbow... Our port chaplain Ilir in Albania took this great picture of Durrës port. To find out more about our work, visit: www.sailors-society.org/about-us/

ITF Seafarers Trust
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IMO
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UK Chamber of Shipping
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Curious on the progress we’ve been making at #SeaspanShipyards? Be sure to check out our updated #progress gallery! http://www.seaspan.com/nss-progress-galleries ...

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Yesterday was the International Day of Families. Our helpline is here to support and assist the families of seafarers too, not just seafarers themselves.

InterManager
Great first panel at the KNect365 #Crew Connect Conference Europe. The panelists agreed that in order to maintain #seafarers’ happiness, they must be relieved on time, provided with internet on board and be supported whilst on board and also at home.

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Through the Porthole
In January of this year, I took over from John Rose as the Director of CHIRP Maritime, the world's foremost confidential hazardous incident reporting programme for mariners. In a career that has spanned four decades, I have spent the last 20 years in the offshore industry on dive and subsea construction vessels, an industry that enjoys an enhanced safety culture, a culture borne out of necessity from the inherent dangers of the business: anchor handling; saturation diving; dynamic positioning and heavy lift operations. Now with CHIRP, I have returned to the world of global commercial shipping.

What I have found most disturbing, is that the reported incidents are very similar to those that were occurring when I first went to sea in the 1970’s. Incredibly, some cases are worse, such as with lifeboats. Mariners are still dying in enclosed spaces, still dying in circumstances related to working at heights, still dying in mooring incidents and electrical/mechanical isolation failures. What’s more, lifeboat incidents have increased to alarming levels that were not even considered a hazard 40 years ago.

So, what is going on? Or more to the point, what is not going on?

Why are these incidents still occurring when all the lessons have been learned? Why are the lessons not being implemented or acted upon? In my opinion, the fault clearly lies with the shipowner/operator; with those who choose to pay only lip service to their own SMS and view it as a necessary compliance rather than a professional enhancement; those who hold IMO convention with contempt whilst presenting a veil of integrity in their pursuit of profit at a cost to the often vulnerable and dependent seafarer.

All too often, incident investigations focus only on the causal factors, the human element. All too often the seafarer takes the blame and in major cases the Master is frequently held as responsible. Yet the Master and crew must work within the parameters of the resources available to them. They can only operate within the endemic company safety culture. All too often the Master is restricted in his/her ability to make vital decisions based upon his/her perception of the reality and that person may well be operating under duress.

CHIRP Maritime takes the view that root causes require to be identified and acted upon. Such questions need to be asked: What was the culture that the Master was forced to operate under? How suitable was the ship for its intended purpose? What budget did they have? How competent were the crew? How effective was the SMS? Most importantly, what support and guidance did the Master receive from the shore management?

Most of us are aware that incidents are the result of a series of failings that when aligned result in the unfortunate event. Those failings need to be traced backward to the root cause. We believe that all too often, that root cause leads down the gangway to the shore management and that shore management must take their portion of responsibility that led to the failing.

In cases of major incidents of criminal negligence against the Master, those responsible ashore should be equally scrutinised and subjected to the same judicial penalties. Perhaps then, there will be a sea of change that brings to a halt the routine isolation, scapegoating and increasing criminalisation of the Master.

The challenge as I see it, is for CHIRP Maritime to continue to represent those who wish to highlight and share their experience with a view to enlightening others so that they might benefit. CHIRP will continue to challenge those who seek to avoid their responsibility and we will do this with the support of professional industry bodies and superior Shipowners and Managers who recognise that critical introspection is a course to ethical and professional enhancement for the global mariner.

In the meantime, CHIRP continues to expand and evolve as we are able to build on our growing access to world expertise and influence in matters of seafarers’ health, safety and environmental impact.

And so the ancient struggle continues. The struggle between the Shipowner and the seafarer, from the Plimsoll Line to the Manila Convention, it seems never ending.

CHIRP Maritime putting the Mariner FIRST
www.chirpmaritime.org
Shipping Companies Must Remain Vigilant Against Piracy Attacks on Vessels in Gulf of Guinea

In the last edition of Dispatches, we reported on the regional guidance that had been issued via a joint-industry alert, following a rise in the number of attacks and kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea.

In this article we sit down with Max Williams, Fleet Operations Director at maritime security company ARC, who told us about the current situation on the Gulf of Guinea.

ARC was set up in 2016 as a management and support company and expert voice for West Africa. The company provides shipping companies with impartial guidance and intelligence on maritime security in the region. It regularly presents to various stakeholders on the security situation and what steps shipping can take to address these issues.

ARC was originally intended for security, but it has since expanded into other services, such as underwater hull cleaning and investigation services.

Following the advice that was issued earlier this year that stated the greatest risks of piracy are at night, Mr Williams says the industry should also be aware that many of the major incidents have also occurred during the day between the hours of 8am and 6pm. These include cases of kidnapping, vessels being fired on and attempted boardings.

“It is important that the incidents are put into context – incidents in anchorages and ports are usually at night because criminals need to operate under the cover of darkness, due to the increased security within the anchorage. Further offshore, far from law enforcement, maritime criminals can operate far more freely,” Mr Williams said.

Dispatches spoke to Mr Williams on the current state of the situation in the Gulf of Guinea.
Is the industry right to be alarmed following the recent rise in attacks and kidnappings?

Industry should certainly take notice of the attacks. We recorded 33 maritime security incidents in March, nine in April and four so far in May on all types of vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, and the threat has spread westwards into the waters of Benin, Togo and Ghana. When the attacks occurred in Benin in January and February, we were concerned that this would be the first sign of pirates moving westwards, and this has been proved right. Furthermore, all vessels are still at risk, with all types being attacked. There may also be a new development in the attacks on fishing vessels. With the control of these larger vessels, pirates can use them as mother vessels which increases the ‘at threat’ area.

What is the current state of the industry in the Gulf of Guinea?

In terms of additional security, many ships are implementing additional security measures, such as embarked armed Navy guards or escort vessels. However, a great many continue to go without, usually due to the cost involved as well as other factors such as Flag State stipulations. Local navy forces have also taken steps to try and combat the threat, with the Benin Navy requiring that all tankers take Benin Navy guards on board when calling at Cotonou, which has had a positive impact.

Do all shipping companies who operate in the area need to be on high alert?

Yes, with no exceptions. According to our records, the only type of vessel yet to be attacked is a vehicle carrier, likely due to the high freeboard. Tankers, container ships, cargo ships, OSVs, bulk carriers and fishing vessels, as well as various local passenger and commercial vessels have all been attacked. At ARC, we strongly believe that security in shipping requires more attention and deserves as much focus as health and safety rightly receives. Unfortunately, the state of maritime security in many places in the world is poor, and not just in the Western Indian Ocean, Gulf of Guinea and South East Asia. A crew that is accurately informed of the threat (with no scaremongering) and appropriately trained in how to respond, in terms of hardening a vessel and conducting effective security drills, will feel safer and will perform their jobs to a higher standard. This long-term approach would also see the cost of security reduced, with less reliance on short-term security and, we believe, a reduction in successful attacks which not only threaten the lives of seafarers, but which have huge financial impact as well.