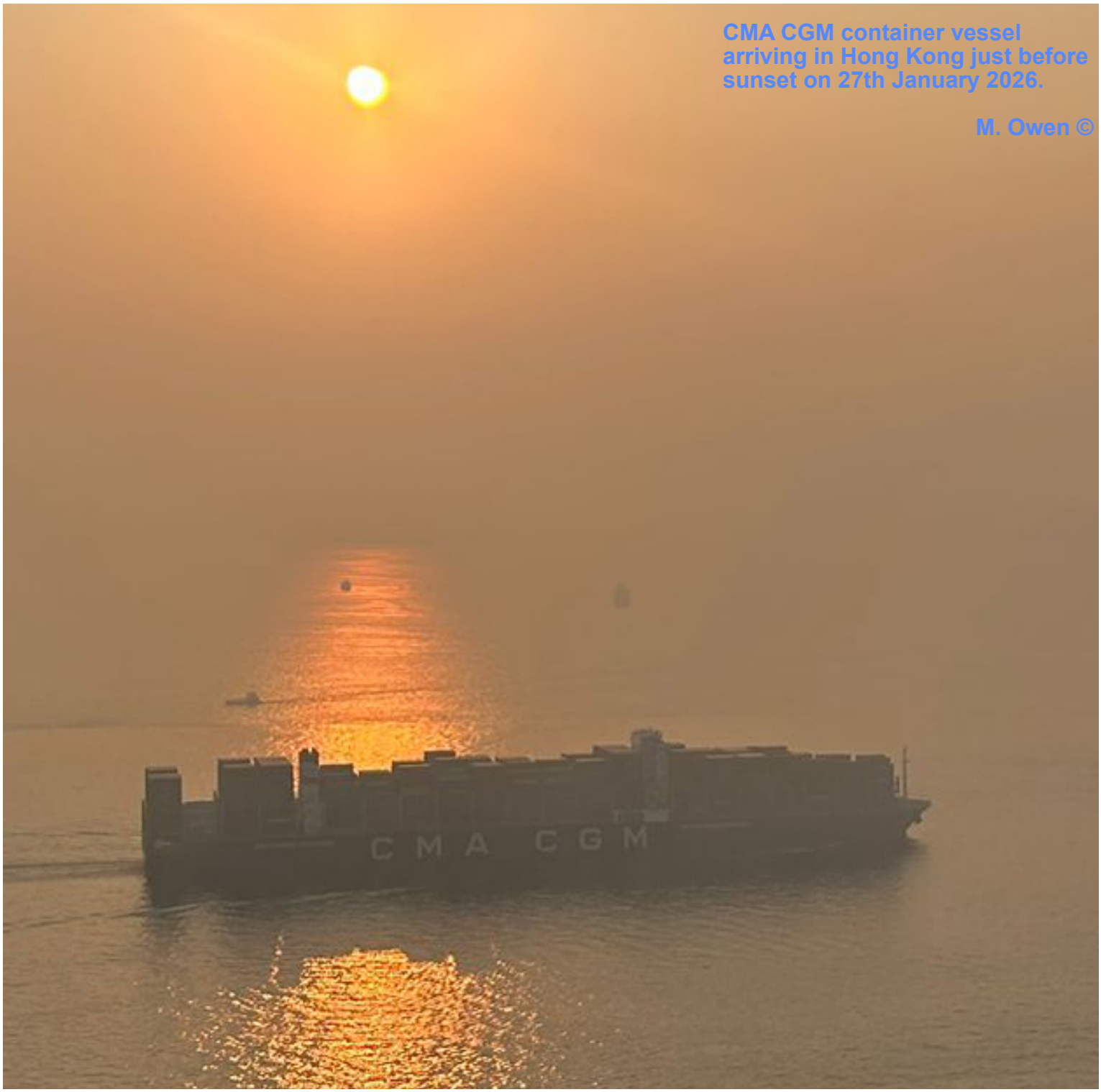
Number 97 February 2026

IFSMA NEWSLETTER

The Shipmasters' International Voice



CMA CGM container vessel arriving in Hong Kong just before sunset on 27th January 2026.

M. Owen ©

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Secretary General's Message

From all at IFSMA, we hope you are all well.

Although 2026 is still quite young, much is already under way in the maritime world.

The International Transport Workers Federation reported that in 2025, a total of 6,223 seafarers were abandoned and 410 ships were involved. We reported this on LinkedIn and Facebook and highlighted that 2025 was the fourth year in a row where records have been broken and the abandonment numbers were 32% higher than in 2024. This affects the majority of seafarer nationalities but Indian, Filipino and Syrian seafarers were hit hardest. This is not just 6,223 seafarers; this is 6,223 families that are affected. Every part of our industry has to take action to help eliminate this.

We are also continuing to see many areas in the world where security issues are directly affecting shipping. The number of shipping companies planning on returning to the Suez Canal and transiting the Red Sea has not increased. This indicates a general nervousness surrounding security in this region.

On a different subject, towards the end of February 2026 the Human Factor, Training & Watchkeeping (HTW) sub-committee is meeting for a week at its 12th session. This year there is a real focus on this sub-committee, as we are starting a comprehensive review of *STCW*. One of the major subjects to be debated is the mandatory minimum requirements for certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnage or more. At the moment the minimum required seatime is 12-months but many national delegations are proposing that 3-months seatime is replaced by approved bridge simulator time. This would effectively reduce actual required time onboard to obtain a Nav OOW license to 9-months. At IFSMA we are consulting with our membership on this important subject.

Also at HTW 12, we have cosponsored a paper that will start a four-phase work plan looking at seafarer fatigue and hours of work and rest. At IFSMA we fully understand that seafarer fatigue is a widespread concern in the industry and we will report back to you after HTW 12 to provide an update on how this is progressing.

Finally, if you haven't seen our updated website, please take a look at www.ifsma.org and continue to observe our postings on LinkedIn and Facebook where we highlight our latest news, initiatives and updates.

We wish you the very best and safe sailing!

Andy Cook
Secretary General

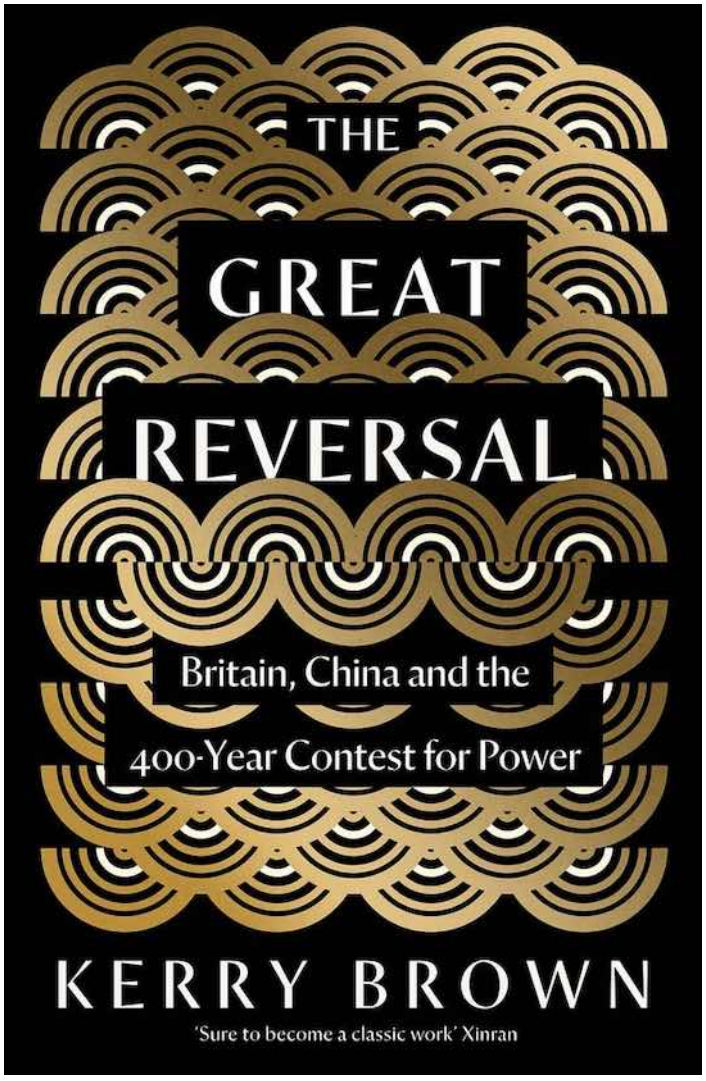
From the News Editor

The Great Reversal: Britain, China and 400-Year Contest for Power*

Here is a vivid history of the relationship between Britain and China, from 1600 to the present.

Without doubt the relationship between Britain and China has shaped the modern world. Chinese art, philosophy and science have had a profound effect upon British culture, while the long history of British exploitation is still bitterly remembered in China although relations have changed over time.

From the early days of the (British) Honourable East India Company chartered in 1600 to the Opium Wars to present-day disputes over Hong Kong, Kerry Brown charts this turbulent and intriguing relationship in full. Britain has always sought to dominate China economically and politically, while China's ideas and exports – from tea and *chinoiserie* to porcelain and silk – have continued to fascinate in the west. Moving on we have seen in China the creation of huge shipbuilding and automotive industries to name but two visible trades with huge volumes of output for export.



One must remember that there was competition in past centuries, from the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) of 1602 and from Sweden's SOIC, founded in 1731.

By the late twentieth century, the balance of power began to shift in China's favour, with global consequences. Brown shows how these interactions changed the world order and argues that an understanding of Britain's relationship with China is now more vital than ever. This review is written at a time when the PRC is to take on a grand building in the City of London, the former Royal Mint near the Tower of London, as a proposed embassy. Much comment on security of telephone lines and data facilities nearby has ensued.

This is a most beautifully written and extensively researched book dealing with Britain's interaction with China over the centuries through the times when Britain was the assertive superpower and China was weak and decaying to the uncomfortable present when China is now a superpower.

One is reminded of the efforts of those who, in the days before Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, were known as China watchers, experts living in the Crown Colony studying every movement to and from the People's Republic and researching all there was to be known about life across the border and how it was changing.

In *The Great Reversal* the reader is well provided for with a helpful chronology over five pages with important dates from the 13th century when an unnamed English interpreter was said to have served the Mongol armies, to 2023 when 130,000 Hong Kongers moved to the UK as a result of a 'pathway to citizenship' offered them. These pages are supported by endnotes from the eleven chapters with sixteen pages of bibliography for further study including online sources, archives and books.

Here the eleven chapters adequately introduce the times, from the diplomatic adventures of George Macartney (1737-1806) and his mission of 1793 and William, First Earl Amherst (1773-1857), as ambassador in 1816. Both postings were aimed at improving relations and trade with the Qing Court in Peking. Then there were the two Anglo-Chinese Wars, not forgetting the days when the Chinese Maritime Customs (including its lighthouse and buoyage services) were staffed by Europeans. There was the dreadful Sino-Japanese War of 1937 to 1945, the rise of the Communists and the Cold War and diplomatic activities in the 1990s in London and Pekin while the future of Hong Kong was being considered.

In all a splendid potted history of the times for those needing background in their trading and, optimistically, speechwriting.

As one would expect Kerry Brown's research has been most thorough. Naturally, as an academic and former diplomat he knew where to look for his sources and as one would expect he had access to the Jardine Matheson archives at Cambridge University. He mentions, too, the ventures of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) and Swires, two of many well-established players in the economy

of China, in the former colony of Hong Kong and the wider SE Asia region which we know so well. The aforementioned business houses certainly provided and secured the mainstay of trade in and out of China and across the Far East over two centuries.

Brown is professor of Chinese studies and director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London. He is the author of over twenty books on modern Chinese politics, history, and society. From 1998 to 2005 he worked at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Beijing, He lived in the Inner Mongolia region of China from 1994 to 1996. He has a PhD in Chinese politics and language from Leeds University. It is said that he has written for every major international news outlet and been interviewed by every major news channel on issues relating to contemporary China and so could be regarded as a Sinologist *par excellence*.

*** By Kerry Brown, Published by Yale University Press.**

ISBN 978 0 300 27292 5, at 373 pages, price £25.00

The IMO Digest

A summary of some of the news received with grateful thanks from the excellent IMO Media service in recent weeks.

Illustrations per www.imo.org as a source and copy-right holder.

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IMO Secretary-General's 2026 New Year Message

IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez has emphasized key items on the IMO's forthcoming agenda.

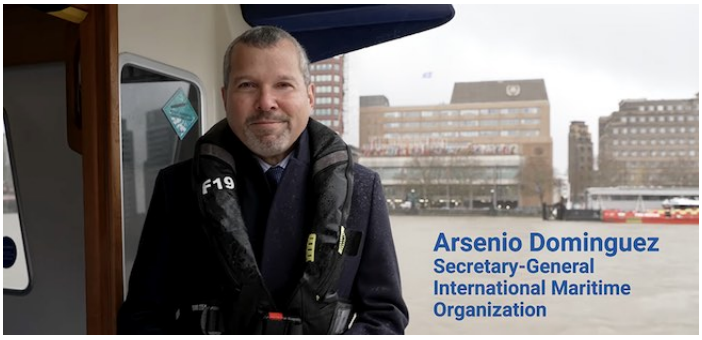
In a video message of 5 January Secretary-General Dominguez said: '*As we start 2026, I would like to focus on something simple: getting things done. At IMO, this is the year of implementation; moving from plans to concrete actions and measurable progress, reflected in our world maritime theme:* ***From Policy to Practice – Powering Maritime Excellence***.

'*Seafarers. Nearly two million work at sea. Recognizing that training needs to keep up with the new realities of the industry, we will start a major update of the STCW Convention – including emerging technologies, new fuels and changing requirements*.

'*On decarbonization, we are moving ahead with efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions from the sector by or around 2050. Stay tuned for further developments.*

'*When it comes to technology, all eyes will be on the finalization of the autonomous ships code.*

'*And of course, IMO will continue supporting the implementation of the High Seas Treaty as it enters into force this month, underlying our global commitment to protect the ocean and biodiversity*.



IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez issued his new year message for 2026.

'*I wish you all a successful 2026 and do not forget to check out our new logo*!'

Readers are invited to watch the S-G's video with the link here: *https://tinyurl.com/muc7kcdb*

With subtitles in French https://tinyurl.com/5hyja68x

And in Spanish https://tinyurl.com/bdzmsxf2

Raft of shipping rules in force from 1 January 2026

Amendments to key IMO treaties include reporting lost containers and mandatory training on preventing harassment and bullying at sea.

A set of amendments to key IMO treaties and Codes entered into force on 1 January 2026. They include the following:

Preventing and responding to bullying, harassment and sexual assault

Amendments to the Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Code (STCW Code) aim to prevent and respond to violence and harassment in the maritime sector, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault.

The amendments are included in table A-VI/1-4 (Specification of minimum standard of competence in personal safety and social responsibilities) of the STCW Code. They outline new mandatory minimum requirements for basic training and instruction for seafarers.

These will equip seafarers with knowledge and understanding of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault, and information on how to prevent and respond to incidents.

Mandatory reporting of lost containers

Amendments to the MARPOL and SOLAS Conventions on mandatory reporting of lost containers

entered into force on 1 January. Containers lost overboard can be a serious hazard to navigation and safety at sea as well as to the marine environment.

MARPOL: The amendments to article V of Protocol I of the MARPOL Convention (Provisions concerning reports on incidents involving harmful substances) add a new paragraph to say that '*In case of the loss of freight container(s), the report required by article II (1) (b) shall be made in accordance with the provisions of SOLAS regulations V/31 and V/32*'.

SOLAS: The amendments to SOLAS chapter V (Safety of navigation), address in particular regulation 31 (Danger messages) and require the master of every ship involved in the loss of freight container(s) to communicate the particulars of such an incident to ships in the vicinity, to the nearest coastal State, and also to the flag State which is required to report the incident to IMO. The amendments also address Regulation 32 (Information required in danger messages), specifying the information to be reported, including position, number of containers lost, etc.

Safety of onboard lifting appliances and anchor handling winches

A new SOLAS regulation II-1/3-13 covers requirements for the application, design and construction, operation, inspection, testing and maintenance of onboard lifting appliances and anchor handling winches.

Two related sets of guidelines for lifting appliances and anchor handling winches support the implementation of the new SOLAS regulation (MSC.1/Circ.1662 on Guidelines for anchor handling winches and MSC.1/Circ.1663 on Guidelines for lifting appliances).

Enhancing the safety of ships using oil fuel

Amendments to SOLAS chapter II-2 are intended to prevent the supply of oil fuel not complying with SOLAS flashpoint requirements (60°C).

The amendments add new definitions and provisions to SOLAS regulation II-2/4 (Probability of ignition), including requiring that ships carrying oil fuel shall, prior to bunkering be provided with a declaration signed and certified by the fuel oil supplier's representative that the oil fuel supplied is in conformity with regulation SOLAS II.2/4.2.1 and with the test method used for determining the flashpoint.

Safety measures for non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters - Polar Code and SOLAS

Amendments to the Polar Code, together with associated amendments to the SOLAS Convention, extend the requirements concerning safety of navigation and voyage planning to fishing vessels of 24 m in length overall and above, pleasure yachts of 300 GT and above not engaged in trade and cargo ships of 300 GT and above but below 500 GT, operating in polar waters.

Amendments to the 2011 ESP Code

New amendments to the International code on the enhanced programme of inspections during surveys of bulk carriers and oil tankers (ESP Code) relate to the role of an Administration in relation to firms conducting thickness measurements of the hull structure of bulk carriers and oil tankers under the 2011 ESP Code, including audits of such firms by the Administration in order to ascertain that the firm is duly organized and managed.

Electronic inclinometers on new containerships and bulk carriers

Amendments to SOLAS Regulation V/19, including the appendix (Certificates), the 1978 SOLAS Protocol and the 1988 SOLAS Protocol, require containerships and bulk carriers of 3,000 gross tonnage and upwards constructed on or after 1 January 2026 to be fitted with an electronic inclinometer, or other means, to determine, display and record the ship's roll motion. The carriage requirement for electronic inclinometers should not apply to cargo ships occasionally carrying cargoes in bulk and general cargo ships carrying containers on deck.

Fire extinguishing – PFOS ban

Amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-2 (Construction – Fire Protection, Fire Detection and Fire Extinction), as well as the 1994 and 2000 International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft (HSC Code) prohibit the use or storage of extinguishing media containing perfluoro-octane sulfonic acid (PFOS). The amendments aim to protect persons on board against exposure to dangerous substances used in firefighting, as well as to minimize the impact of fire-extinguishing media that are deemed detrimental to the environment.

The prohibition applies to ships/high-speed craft constructed on or after 1 January 2026; and all ships constructed before 1 January 2026 shall comply with the ban not later than the date of the first survey on or after 1 January 2026.

Fire safety for vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces

Amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-2 introduce new requirements to adequately protect ships from the fire hazards in vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces, and weather decks intended for the carriage of vehicles. They include requirements for a fixed fire detection and fire alarm system; an efficient fire patrol system in special category spaces; and an effective video monitoring system in vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces for continuous monitoring of these spaces, to allow for quick identification of a fire, with cameras to be installed to cover the whole space, high enough to see over cargo and vehicles after loading.

Associated amendments introduced to the FSS Code supplement the engineering and installation aspects of fire protection systems in such spaces.

International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG)

The revised and updated consolidated International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG) incorporating amendment 42-24 entered into force from 1 January 2026.

The requirements apply to all ships carrying dangerous goods in packaged form.

Grain Code

Amendments to the International Code for the Safe Carriage of Grain in Bulk (Grain Code) introduce a new class of loading conditions for special compartments.

IGF Code amendments to enhance safety

Amendments to the International Code of Safety for Ship Using Gases or Other Low-flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code), adopted at MSC 108. They aim to enhance safety by regulating a variety of issues, such as pump suction wells, safety relief valve discharge, fuel preparation rooms, structural fire protection and hazardous zones.

Application of high manganese austenitic steel for cryogenic service

Amendments to the International Code of the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code) and IGF Code, adopted at MSC 106, concern application of high manganese austenitic steel for cryogenic service.

Life-saving Appliance (LSA) Code

The amendments introduced to the LSA Code provides new requirements on ventilation for totally enclosed lifeboats (installed on or after 1 January 2029).

ECDIS updates

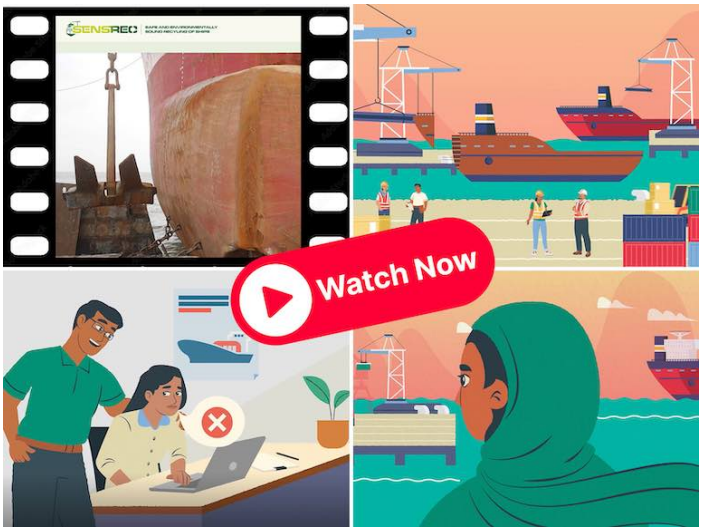
Revised performance standards for electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS) introduce a phased implementation of new International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) product specifications (i.e. S-98, S-100 and S-101) for ECDIS, including the capability of digital exchange of ships' route plans. MSC.530(106)/Rev.1 applies to new ECDIS installations from 1 January 2026 on a voluntary basis, and for all new ECDIS installations from 1 January 2029.

New IMO video series launched

Highlighting the vital role of women in ship recycling

The IMO's SENSREC project has officially launched a new three-part video series exploring the diverse roles women play within the ship recycling industry.

This initiative aims to demonstrate how the sector can evolve to become more inclusive, equitable, and productive by utilizing the transferable skills of women in the maritime workforce.



By showcasing these real-world contributions, the project helps bring new audiences to the conversation regarding maritime sustainability and workforce diversity.

A three-part journey into inclusivity

The series is structured into three distinct segments, each focusing on a critical pillar of a modern maritime workplace thus:

- **Empowering contribution:** An exploration of the meaningful impact women make in ship recycling and the wider maritime sector.
- **Safety and respect:** A deep dive into the prevention of harassment and discrimination. This segment highlights why awareness and respect are essential for a safe workforce, particularly in traditionally male-dominated industries.
- **The power of diversity:** The final part showcases the benefits of gender inclusivity, illustrating how diversity brings fresh perspectives, strengthens teamwork, and encourages innovation.

Increased inclusion of women is not just a matter of equity; it makes workplaces safer and more efficient.

This series serves as a conversation starter, encouraging the industry to take concrete actions toward creating sustainable maritime workplaces.

To find out more

To learn more about IMO's SENSREC project readers are invited to use the link here:
https://sensrec.imo.org/

To watch the full video series readers are invited to see here:
https://www.youtube.com/@IMOHQ/videos

IMO welcomes entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement

The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement targets sustainable use of marine biodiversity in international waters.

This is the world's first global treaty to protect ocean life in international waters and entered into force on 17 January 2026, bringing into effect legally-binding rules for the sustainable use and management of marine resources in the high seas.

Topics addressed

Formally known as the ***Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction*** (BBNJ Agreement), the treaty addresses:

- Marine genetic resources, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.
- Measures such as area-based management tools, including marine protected areas.
- Environmental impact assessments.
- Capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology.

IMO S-G's welcome

Welcoming this milestone, IMO Secretary-General Mr Arsenio Dominguez said:

'*The world has demonstrated that countries can come together with a common vision and build a framework to manage the ocean sustainably while ensuring its benefits are shared fairly amongst all humanity. Now we must continue working together to put these rules into action. IMO is ready to support the BBNJ implementation within IMO's sphere of expertise*.'

Shipping and marine environment protection on the high seas

Ships trading across the world's oceans are subject to stringent environmental, safety and security rules, which apply throughout their voyage.

IMO has developed more than fifty globally-binding treaties and other measures to support shipping's sustainable use of the oceans, enforced through a well-established system of flag, coastal and port State control.

IMO instruments

IMO instruments that actively contribute to the conservation of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, include, among others:

- International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution by Ships (MARPOL).
- International Ballast Water Management Convention, which aims to prevent the transfer of potentially invasive aquatic species.
- London Convention and Protocol, regulating the dumping of wastes at sea.

A new legally-binding framework is currently being developed to address ships' biofouling and minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species.

Protective measures

In addition, IMO has adopted numerous protective measures, including designating Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs), Special Areas and Emission Control Areas in which a high level of protection and stricter rules apply to prevent sea pollution. IMO has also issued guidance on protecting marine life from underwater ship noise.

Decades of negotiations

The BBNJ Agreement entered into force following its adoption in June 2023 – a culmination of decades of negotiations and preparatory works.

Ratification

It is understood that more than eighty nations have ratified the Agreement to date.

To learn more

To receive more information on IMO's role in protecting the world's oceans readers are invited to use the link here: https://tinyurl.com/4t6ryn2a

IMO Submissions for Exceptional Bravery at Sea

IMO is currently accepting nominations for exceptional acts of bravery performed at sea during the period 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2026.

Nominations may also involve displays of extraordinary seamanship skills in very difficult conditions or any other acts of outstanding courage at sea.

A reminder

IMO has issued a reminder that the deadline for submission is 31 March 2026.

Further information, including the Guidelines and the Nomination form in Word format, can be found in the link below: https://tinyurl.com/3aek8e34

However please note:

IFSMA Members who wish to make nominations must submit nominations to the IFSMA Secretariat in the first instance.

Safety rules for battery, wind and nuclear-powered ships

Draft workplan agreed

IMO's Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC) has finalised a workplan to develop a safety regulatory framework for ships using new technologies and alternative fuels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The draft workplan will be submitted to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111) for approval in May this year.

This workplan will involve developing or amending existing safety regulations related to nuclear power; wind-propulsion and wind-assisted power; and lithium-ion batteries and swappable traction battery containers on ships, that are under the purview of the SDC Sub-Committee.

SDC12

Closing the 12th session of the IMO Sub-Committee, which met from 19 to 23 January in London, IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said the completion of the work plan was a "major achievement".

He added: '*This will ensure that safety considerations evolve in parallel with the rapid technological progress driven by the IMO's Strategy on the Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships*'[1].

Milestones

Once the draft workplan is endorsed by the Maritime Safety Committee, IMO will work towards key milestones, including:

- 2028 (MSC 111): Adoption of amendments to SOLAS regulation II-1/41 to allow for batteries to be used as the main source of electrical power and lighting systems.
- 2029 (MSC 116): Approval of interim guidelines for the safety of ships using wind propulsion and wind-assisted power.
- 2030 (MSC 118): Adoption of the revised Nuclear Code and amendments to SOLAS chapter VIII.

At IMO the Sub-Committee established the SDC Correspondence Group on GHG Safety to compile and analyse information related to nuclear and wind power, as well as develop draft amendments to SOLAS regulation II-1/41 to allow for batteries to be used as the main source of electrical power and lighting systems.

The Correspondence Group will submit a written report to the next session of the Sub-Committee (SDC 13) in 2027.

To read the full meeting summary of SDC 12 readers are invited to use the link here: https://tinyurl.com/5263nd2b

[1] **https://tinyurl.com/y73rty6r**

Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC 12)

Highlights from the Secretary-General's closing remarks 23 January 2026

'*Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,*

'*As we conclude the twelfth session of the Sub Committee on Ship Design and Construction, I wish to acknowledge a few important matters.*

'*Firstly, this session marks a significant milestone with the finalization of the Guidelines for the Use of Fibre Reinforced Plastics (FRP) within Ship Structures, drawing on the valuable experience gained during the application of the current Interim FRP Guidelines.*

'*Equally noteworthy is the progress made during the Experience Building Phase (EBP) on Underwater Radiated Noise (URN). The Sub-Committee's work is instrumental in supporting the wider IMO objective of reducing the impact of shipping on the marine environment, including vulnerable species. Your agreement on a two-year extension of the EBP, will now need to be approved by the Marine Environment Protection Committee.*

'*You have also finalized the draft Guidelines on the Use of Remote Inspection Techniques (RIT) for ESP surveys. The Guidelines will enhance the efficiency and safety of survey processes by enabling the use of modern inspection technologies, while ensuring robust standards for data quality and oversight remain in place.*

'*Further, I commend the Sub-Committee for completing the draft amendments to MSC resolution on means of access for inspections, and for finalizing the draft Explanatory Notes for Safe Return to Port and Orderly Evacuation and Abandonment after a Fire*

or Flooding Casualty. These important instruments will support consistent implementation of SOLAS requirements and strengthen the safety of passenger ships.

'*Another major achievement of this session is the completion of the work plan for the development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels. This will ensure that safety considerations evolve in parallel with the rapid technological progress driven by the Organization's GHG Strategy.*

'*My sincere appreciation to you, Chair, Mr Erik Tvedt of Denmark, and to your Vice Chair, Mr Charles Rawson of the United States, for steering this Sub Committee with professionalism, deep subject matter expertise, tact, and a consistently positive attitude. As this is the Vice Chair's final session, I wish Mr Rawson every success in his future endeavours. I also warmly congratulate the re-elected Chair, Mr Tvedt, and look forward to your continued leadership when you chair SDC 13 next year.*

'*I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Chairs of the working, expert and drafting groups:*

Ms Therese Bornemann-Christensen (Denmark);
Mr Alexander Dierichs (Germany);
Mr Sifis Papageorgiou (Norway);
Mr Charles Rawson (United States) and
Ms Marie-Lucie Susini (Belgium).

'*As always, this is also an opportune moment to express our gratitude to those delegates who are leaving and concluding their tenure with us and for whom this marks the final session of the Committee:*

'*Captain Adriano Pires da Cruz, Alternate Permanent Representative (Brazil) is retiring. Thank you very much for everything and hope to see you again in the future.*

To close the Secretary-General paid tribute to a number of long-serving IMO staff who were due to retire from the Conference Division.

IMLI students learn to turn IMO instruments into International Law.

Limited national capacity to draft strong maritime laws often undermines the effective implementation of IMO instruments, according to findings of the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS).

To help address this challenge, IMO's Legal Affairs Office delivered a four-day workshop on the general principles of drafting national legislation to implement IMO conventions at the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Msida, Malta (20 to 23 January).

The workshop, funded through IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), focused on a critical message: IMO conventions do not take effect automatically. For treaties to be effectively implemented, they must be transposed into domestic law through dedicated implementing legislation, backed by appropriate enforcement measures.

A total of 63 IMLI students from 30 countries took part in the training, which combined legal theory with hands-on drafting practice. Sessions ranged from an overview of IMO's mandate and treaty framework to in-depth analysis of key maritime conventions. Participants explored techniques for translating international obligations into national legislation, identifying provisions requiring primary legislation versus those suitable for subordinate regulations, and strengthening coordination among national maritime authorities.

The workshop focused on the approach used in Common Law systems and drew on the expertise of experienced legislative drafters from the United Kingdom. It was tailored for future qualified lawyers from maritime administrations, legislative advisers and policymakers, as well as officials from Attorney General's Offices, Ministries of Justice and national legislative bodies responsible for implementing IMO instruments.

IMO reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Member States, particularly small island developing States

(SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), that face challenges in establishing and updating maritime legislation, including keeping pace with amendments adopted under the tacit amendment procedure.

The workshop supports and promotes the 2026-2027 World Maritime Day theme, "From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence" by helping ensure that international maritime standards are effectively implemented at national level. It was the fifth workshop delivered by IMO on this topic since 2017.

PaxOcean – ABB collaboration

Singapore's first electric tug

***Deployment* April 2026**

PaxOcean Group and ABB's collaboration on Singapore's first fully electric tug has reached a significant project milestone, with the vessel completing commissioning ahead of its expected deployment in April 2026.

Emission-free harbour operations

Built by PaxOcean Group, a subsidiary of Singapore-based Kuok Maritime Group, the 50-ton bollard pull *PXO-ACE-1* features an integrated electric propulsion system from ABB for efficient, emission-free harbour operations.

PaxOcean Group and ABB collaborate on Singapore first electric tug.

Image courtesy PaxOcean Group ©.

Newbuild harbour craft requirement

With the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore requiring all newbuild harbour craft to be fully electric or compatible with B100 biofuels or net-zero fuels by 2030, the new vessel marks the first step towards the electrification of the city-state's 1,600-plus harbour vessels. In addition to helping improve local air quality, battery-driven vessels substantially reduce onboard noise and vibrations compared to diesel-powered craft, resulting in a healthier working environment for crew.

Optimizing drivetrain efficiency while extending operating range

As the core of *PXO-ACE-1*'s power and control system, ABB's Onboard DC Grid™ with PEMS™ power and energy management system will enable the e-tug to make optimal use of its three-megawatt-hour battery pack to support wide variations in power demand, including instant high torque. The modular and highly customizable Onboard DC Grid™ facilitates battery integration and reduces the number of energy conversions between different sources and loads, thereby optimizing drivetrain efficiency while extending operating range per battery charge.

Comment

Olli Tuunainen, Local Business Line Manager, Singapore, ABB's Marine & Ports division commented: '*Tugs are among the industry's leading candidates for full electrification given their operational profile, relative proximity to charging infrastructure, and the operational benefits they derive from an electric drivetrain, including instant power and enhanced crew comfort. We believe that this project will provide a blueprint for further electrification in Singapore and throughout Asia*.'

Copernicus and climate change

The 2025 record

The year 2025 was the third warmest on record globally, according to the Global Climate Highlights report 2025 from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) which operates the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) on behalf of the European Commission.

Global temperature in 2025 was only marginally (0.01°C) cooler than 2023, and 0.13°C cooler than 2024, which remains the warmest year on record.

According to ECMWF's ERA5 reanalysis, global temperatures from the past three years (2023–2025) have averaged more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level (1850–1900), marking the first time a three-year period has exceeded the 1.5°C limit. The report also shows that the past eleven years have been the eleven warmest on record.

In 2025, according to ERA5 [1], the global surface air temperature was 1.47°C above the pre-industrial level, following 1.60°C in 2024, the warmest year on record. Utilising several methods, the current level of long-term global warming is estimated to be around 1.4°C above the pre-industrial level. Based on the current rate of warming, the Paris Agreement's limit of 1.5°C for long-term global warming could be reached by the end of this decade – over a decade earlier than predicted based on the rate of warming at the time the agreement was signed.

The last three years 2023-2025 were exceptionally warm for two main reasons. The first is the build-up of

greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, from continued emissions and reduced uptake of carbon dioxide by natural sinks. Secondly, sea-surface temperatures reached exceptionally high levels across the ocean, associated with an El Niño event and other ocean variability factors, amplified by climate change. Additional factors include changes in the amounts of aerosols and low cloud and variations in atmospheric circulation.

As in 2023 and 2024, a significant fraction of the globe was much warmer than average in 2025. Air and sea surface temperatures in the tropics were lower than in 2023 and 2024, yet still much above average in many areas outside of the tropics. The lower tropical temperatures compared to 2023-2024 were partly due to the persistence of near-average ('ENSO-neutral') or weak La Niña conditions in the equatorial Pacific throughout 2025. The higher temperatures of the two previous years were partially influenced by a strong El Niño event. El Niño tends to have a warming effect on global temperatures, superimposed on long-term human-caused global warming, whereas La Niña tends to have the opposite effect. Temperatures over the tropical Atlantic and Indian Ocean were also less extreme in 2025 than in 2024.

Higher temperatures in the polar regions partly offset the lower temperatures observed in tropical regions during 2025. The annual average temperatures reached their highest value on record in the Antarctic [2], and their second-highest in the Arctic [2]. Record-high annual temperatures were also observed in several other regions, notably in the northwestern and southwestern Pacific, the northeastern Atlantic, far eastern and north-western Europe and central Asia.

Comment

Florian Pappenberger, ECMWF Director-General, commented: '*This report confirms that Europe and the world are in the warmest decade on record and that the European Commission's investment in Copernicus continues to be critical. As an international organisation serving 35 nations, ECMWF provides the world leading science for informed decisions to be made, and ultimately action taken, to adapt to climate change, because every year and every degree counts. Preparedness and prevention remain possible but only when action is guided by robust, scientific evidence*'.

Mauro Facchini, Head of Earth Observation at the Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space, European Commission, added: '*Copernicus was established to provide policymakers, businesses, academics, and citizens in Europe and across the world with trusted, independent climate and atmospheric insights to inform decisions. Today's results show just how vital that mission has become. Exceeding a three-year average of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is a milestone none of us wished to reach, yet it reinforces the importance of Europe's leadership in climate monitoring to inform both mitigation and adaptation. We expect Copernicus to play an important role in implementing tailored new tools for European climate resilience and risk management*.'

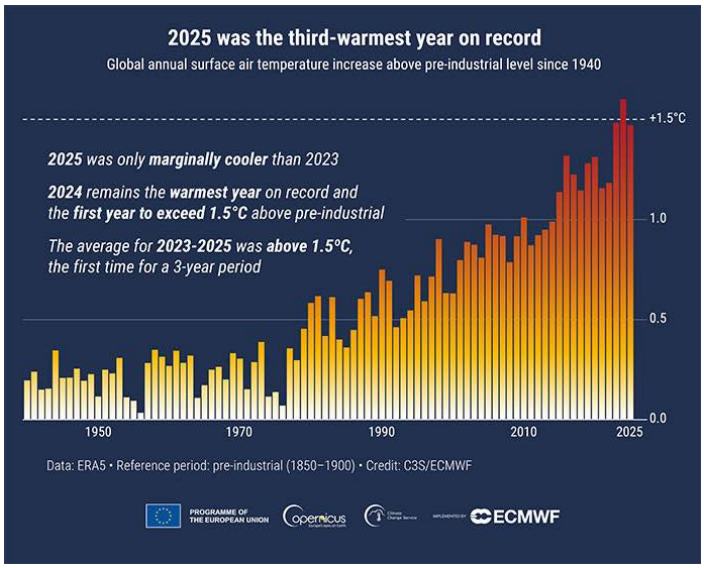
Carlo Buontempo, Director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service, reflected: '*The fact that the last eleven years were the warmest on record provides further evidence of the unmistakable trend towards a hotter climate. The world is rapidly approaching the long-term temperature limit set by the Paris agreement. We are bound to pass it; the choice we now have is how to best manage the inevitable overshoot and its consequences on societies and natural systems*.'

Laurence Rouil, Director of Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service at ECMWF, concluded with: '*Atmospheric data from 2025 paints a clear picture: human activity remains the dominant driver of the exceptional temperatures we are observing. Atmospheric greenhouse gases have steadily increased over the last 10 years. We will continue to track greenhouse gases, aerosols, and other atmospheric indicators to help decision makers understand the risks of continuing emissions and respond effectively, reinforcing synergies between air quality and climate policies. The atmosphere is sending us a message, and we must listen*.'

In 2025, half of the global land area experienced more days than average with at least strong heat stress – defined as feels-like temperature of 32°C or above. Heat stress is recognised by the WHO as the leading cause of global weather-related deaths [3]. In areas with dry and often windy conditions, high temperatures also contributed to the spread and intensification of exceptional wildfires, which produce carbon, toxic air pollutants like particulate matter, and ozone, which impacts human health. This was the case in parts of Europe – which experienced its highest annual total wildfire emissions – and North America, according to CAMS data. These emissions significantly degraded air quality and had potentially harmful impacts on human health at both the local and larger scales.

The exceptional conditions of 2025 come in a year marked by notable extreme events across many regions, including record heatwaves, severe storms in Europe, Asia and North America, and wildfires in Spain, Canada and Southern California. While these individual events are not analysed or attributed in the report, they provide timely context for the growing public attention on climate risks in 2025[4].

Rising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere [5] – mainly a direct consequence of human activities – are the primary driver of the observed long-term increase in the global mean temperature. Monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions and concentrations by the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) provides information to support the implementation of climate mitigation policies.



Anomalies and extremes in surface air temperature for 2025, 2023 and 2024. Colour categories refer to the percentiles of the temperature distributions for the 1991–2020 reference period. The extreme ("Coolest" and "Warmest") categories are based on rankings for the period 1979–2025.

Data source: ERA5. Credit: C3S/ECMWF ©.

Additional data from the 2025 Global Climate Highlights report:

Global temperature

- The global average temperature in 2025 was 14.97°C, 0.59°C above the 1991-2020 average, 0.13°C below 2024, the warmest year on record.
- Air temperature above global land areas was second warmest, 0.20ºC cooler than 2024 and 0.01ºC above 2023.
- Global sea-surface temperature (extrapolar) was 20.73ºC and third warmest after 2024 and 2023.
- January 2025 was globally the warmest January on record. March, April and May were each the second warmest for the time of year. Each month of the year, except for February and December, was warmer than the corresponding month in any year before 2023.

Europe

- 2025 was the third-warmest year on record for Europe, with an average temperature of 10.41°C, 1.17°C above the average for the 1991-2020 reference period and 0.30°C below the warmest year, in 2024.

Sea ice extent

- In February 2025, the combined sea ice cover from both poles fell to its lowest value since at least the start of satellite observations in the late 1970's.
- In the Arctic, the monthly sea ice extent was the lowest on record for the time of year in January, February, March, and December, and the second lowest in June and October. March marked the lowest annual maximum on record, while the September minimum ranked only 13th lowest.
- In the Antarctic, the monthly extent reached its fourth-lowest annual minimum in February and its third-lowest annual maximum in September.

The report

The ECMWF report *2025 Global Climate Highlights* is available here: https://tinyurl.com/m3hsbfua

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[1] All findings, unless otherwise stated, are based on the ERA5 global climate reanalysis dataset produced by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) and covering the period from January 1940 to present. Datasets other than ERA5 may rank 2025 second warmest due to the relatively small difference between 2023 and 2025.

[2] Antarctic is defined here as the land and ocean areas south of 60ºS, the Arctic as the land and ocean areas north of 60ºN.

[3] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health

[4] More detailed analysis of the most significant events in Europe will be provided as part of European State of the Climate (ESOTC) that ECMWF and WMO will release in spring 2026.

[5] https://tinyurl.com/ybnh78tt

Fatigue at sea

This subject was covered on our Facebook, LinkedIn and Website during January.

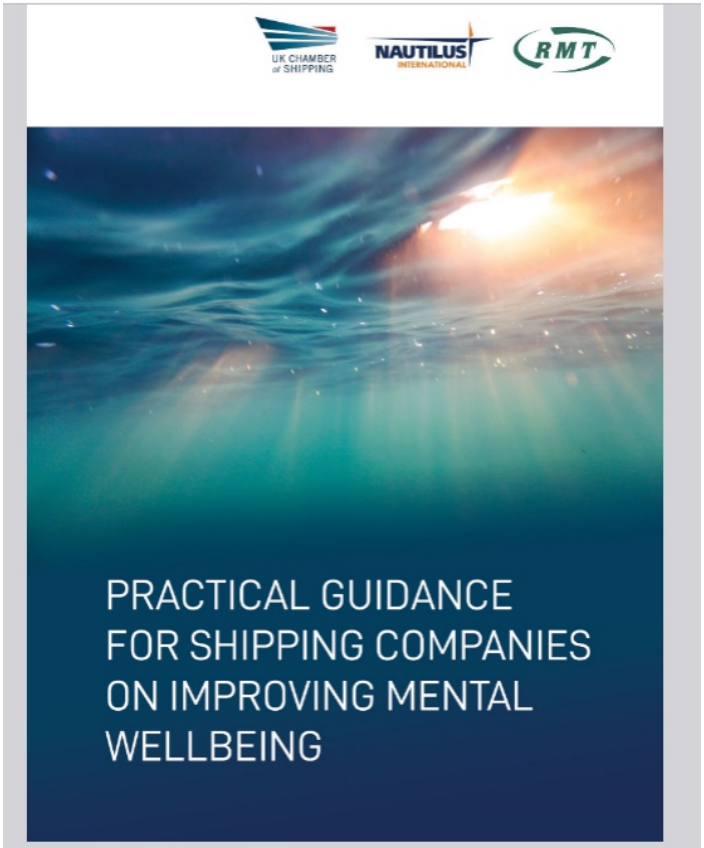
Much has been written and spoken about this topic that has been with us for years if not for generations.

Speaking personally a very close friend of nearly half a century had to come ashore and give up his command after four decades at sea doing the job he loved.

His closing months afloat were in ro-ro trades in NW Europe with, as he put it, a new port every day in an unending routine. This was accompanied by all the usual hazards of the bridge, bad weather, increasing demands of the trade, a competitive owner and not enough sleep. This took a toll on his health and particularly, his mental wellbeing, such that he had to come ashore and go into retirement early, much against his will.

Studying a recent report from Singapore, *Collision between Hafnia Nile and Ceres 1at South China Sea on 19 July 2024* (see TIB/MAI/CAS.173 Transport

Safety Investigation Bureau, Ministry of Transport Singapore, published on 28 December 2025 it was noted that the Officer-of-the-Watch had less than two hours of uninterrupted rest, in 38.5-hour period, before commencing the midnight watch. This followed overnight travel, immediate assumption of duties after joining, and rest disturbance caused by unannounced fire-alarm testing.



The investigation also noted that the officer, who signed on the same day, undertook duty shortly after arrival following overnight international travel. These reflected a broader risk that newly joined personnel may commence operational duties before obtaining adequate recovery time, increasing the potential risk for tiredness.

With only about two hours of rest in a 38.5-hour period, the officer was likely, the investigation stated, to be experiencing fatigue, which may have reduced his alertness and affected his performance and judgement during the developing close-quarters situation, contributing to the occurrence.

Let us take a look at two institutions which have acted to provide guidance on this topic of fatigue.

UK Chamber of Shipping

In 2018 the UK National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee

(NMOHSC) published *Practical Guidance for Shipping Companies on Improving Mental Wellbeing*. This was produced by the Chamber in conjunction with Nautilus International and the UK's Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT).

The purpose of this document is to set out practical steps that companies may wish to take to promote the mental wellbeing of their employees It is focused principally on seafarers but some parts of the guidance may be equally applicable to shore personnel

The NMOHSC does not endorse the examples as part of industry wide implementation but presents them as practical steps that have proven beneficial to seafarer wellbeing in the specific circumstances where they have been applied.

The 22-page publication is available here: https://tinyurl.com/ybnuwm33

International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

According to the ITF when seafarers are surveyed, they consistently highlight fatigue as a major issue affecting their working environment.

Much advice is given on the organization's website here with a four-page factsheet available to be downloaded with this link: https://tinyurl.com/3y873jex

According to the definition given by the IMO, Fatigue is a state of feeling tired, weary, or sleepy that results from prolonged mental or physical work, extended periods of anxiety, exposure to harsh environments, or loss of sleep. The effects of fatigue are impaired performance and diminished alertness.

In other words, something is happening which is harming the physical and mental wellbeing of the sufferer. For seafarers this is most likely to be overwork, long and irregular hours resulting in lack of sleep.

Much advice is provided on the ITF website which indicates that the situation will be made worse by many other factors often faced by seafarers, for example:

- Loneliness, lack of communication with home, social interaction etc.
- Isolation.
- Safety issues with the vessel.
- A lack of personal protective equipment.
- Issues with non-payment of wages.
- Inadequate and/or poor-quality food.
- Risks such as piracy.
- Repatriation delays following completion of contracts.

These and other factors can cause anxiety, stress and even depression, and when these induce fatigue it is not a stigma and seafarers need to look for counselling at early stages

When seafarers are surveyed, they consistently highlight fatigue as a major issue affecting their working environment. One study, Project HORIZON, demonstrated that sleepiness levels for some watch-

keeping regimes are high, and actual sleep can occur.

Seafarers are increasingly expected to take on heavier workloads with less crew support, and to work longer hours with less time off – on board or on shore – to recuperate.

Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)

MLC 2006 states that the competent authority in ratifying countries should ensure that the national guidelines for the management of occupational safety and health address the physical and mental effects of fatigue.

MLC 2006 identifies that standard working hours are 8 hours per day, with one day of rest per week and additional rests on public holidays.

According to national rules, the employer must guarantee that crewmembers stick to maximum working hours or minimum resting time:

The maximum working hours must not exceed 14 hours in any 24-hour period and 72 hours in any 7-day period

The minimum resting time cannot be less than 10 hours in any 24-hour period and 77 hours in any 7-day period

You can divide the hours of rest into a maximum of two parts. If you split the rest, one of the two rest periods must last at least 6 hours and the interval between consecutive rest periods cannot exceed 14 hours.

What are the dangers of fatigue?

Safety at sea is more likely to be endangered as crews are not fully alert. The desire for sleep can encourage the taking of shortcuts. Health suffers, now and in the future, through taking poor care of one's physical and mental health needs.

Estimates suggest that 25% of marine casualties are caused by fatigue.

Comprehensive research on seafarer fatigue shows how the long working hours culture takes its toll on seafarers:

- One in four seafarers said they had fallen asleep while on watch.
- Almost 50% of seafarers taking part in a study reported working weeks of 85 hours or more.
- Around half said their working hours had increased over the past 10 years, despite regulations intended to combat fatigue.
- Almost 50% of seafarers surveyed considered their working hours presented a danger to their personal safety.
- Some 37% said their working hours sometimes posed a danger to the safe operations of their ship.

What about on-board records?

Increased workloads lead to another problem – false record keeping. Seafarers are either bowing to the pressures of the job – or being forced – to falsify the records of the hours they actually work. This practice undermines onboard safety and health – and makes the problem of long hours working and crew fatigue harder to address.

How can seafarers cope with fatigue?

The symptoms of fatigue can endanger the seafarer, their colleagues, their ship and the marine environment. The danger signs include:

- Inability to stay awake.
- Clumsiness.
- Headaches and giddiness.
- Loss of appetite.
- Insomnia.
- Moodiness and needless worrying.
- Slow responses.
- Difficulty concentrating.

If seafarers become aware of these signs, they should take the following steps:

- Use the maximum allowance of sleep, rest and leisure time.
- Inform the supervisor if it is thought fatigue may be impairing an individual's performance.
- Where possible, rotate tasks to mix heavy and lighter duties.

- Exercise daily.
- Eat as healthily as possible, limit smoking, caffeine and alcohol consumption

What is the ITF doing?

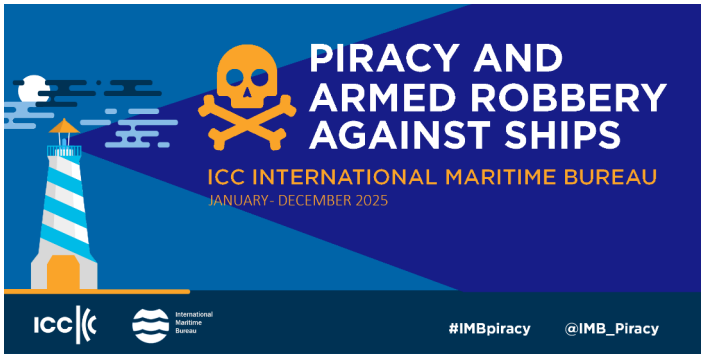
The ITF campaign against fatigue at sea argues for:

- Safe crewing levels on board ship.
- Enforcement of maritime regulations on minimum hours of rest and/or maximum hours of work.
- Universal recognition of the right of all seafarers to shore leave.
- An onboard safety cultures.
- Fatigue to be treated as a serious health and safety issue.

IMB Annual Piracy and Armed Robbery Report

2025

The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported an increase in global maritime incidents and piracy and armed robbery in 2025, classifying most cases as low-level.



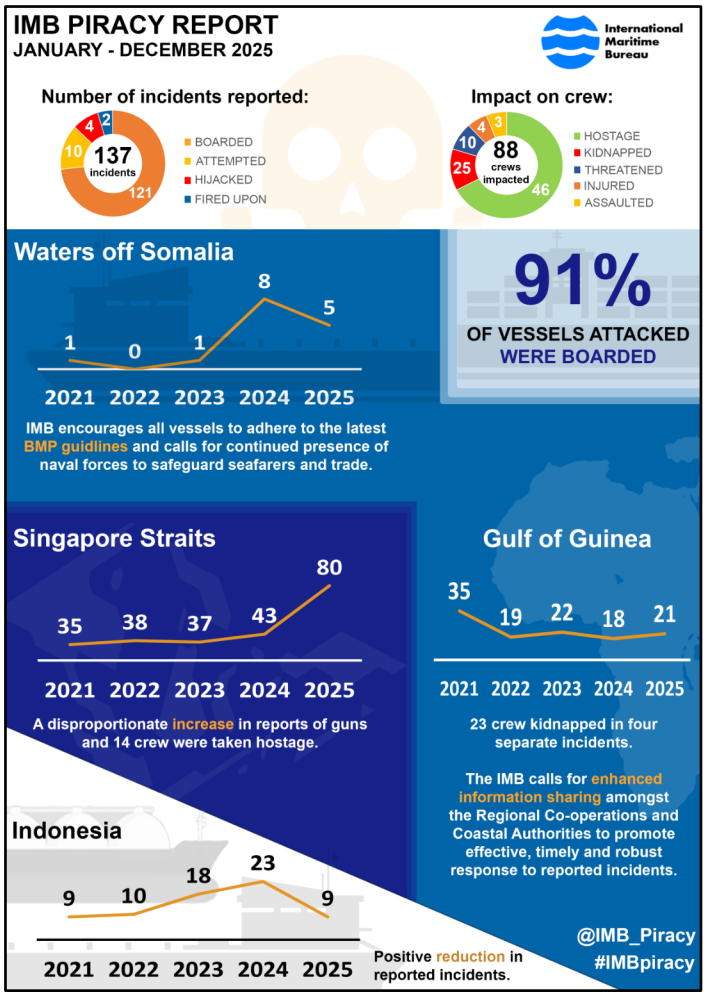
According to the *IMB Annual Piracy and Armed Robbery Report*, 137 incidents against ships were recorded in 2025 compared to 116 in 2024 and 120 in 2023. It reveals that 121 vessels were boarded, four vessels were hijacked and two fired upon as well as 10 attempted attacks.

While most reported incidents in 2025 were categorised as low level, violence against crew continues, with 46 crew members taken hostage in 2025 compared to 126 in 2024 and 73 in 2023. Twenty-five crew were reported kidnapped, compared to 12 in 2024 and 14 in 2023. A further 10 crew were threatened, four injured and three assaulted in 2025.

Use of guns

The reported use of guns continues to rise. In 2025, they were reported in 42 incidents compared to 26 in 2024. Knives were reported in 33 incidents in 2025, compared to 39 incidents in 2024.

ICC Secretary General John W.H. Denton AO commented: '*Maritime trade remains a cornerstone of real economic activity and growth. The rise in reported maritime incidents highlights the importance of protecting seafarers and securing key shipping routes not only for crew safety, but for the stability of global supply chains and the economies that depend on them.*



'*Ensuring safe passage at sea requires sustained cooperation, with regional and international partners working together to safeguard maritime commerce.*'

Piracy off Somali coast contained by naval presence

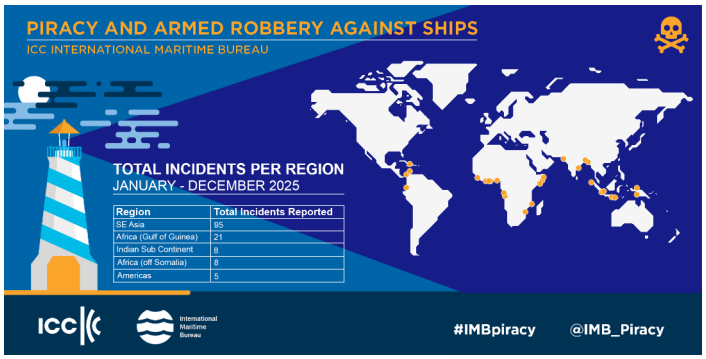
Although only a small number of incidents were reported off the Somali coast in 2025, two incidents in November took place far from shore, showing that Somali pirate groups still have the ability to operate at range. In both cases, well-prepared crews, together with the swift response of naval forces, ensured the safety of the vessels and their crews.

The lack of a broader resurgence in Somali piracy continues to reflect the strong deterrent effect of sustained naval presence, supported by vessel hardening and the use of best management practices. IMB acknowledges active patrolling and robust responses to piracy by naval forces and encourages their continued presence in these waters.

The Gulf of Guinea also saw another year of restricted piracy activity, thanks to the efforts of the Gulf of Guinea authorities. Twenty-one incidents were reported in 2025, compared with 18 in 2024, and 22 in 2023.

Efforts to curb incidents require further coordination and strengthening to reduce violence against crew members said the report. In 2025, the region accounted for the kidnapping of 23 crew in four separate incidents, along with three hostages and one injured crew.

IMB Director Michael Howlett added: '*Reported incidents off the Somali coast highlight the ongoing importance of a sustained naval presence in these trade-critical waters.*



'*We also commend the Gulf of Guinea authorities for the steps taken to reduce reported incidents, while recognising that crew members continue to be affected. Sustained and strengthened cooperation between regional authorities, navies, international partners, and industry remains essential to protect seafarers and safeguard trade.*'

Highest reported incidents in Singapore Straits

The Singapore Straits recorded the highest number of reported incidents in 2025 with 80 compared to 43 in 2024. These incidents account for more than half (58%) of the globally reported incidents of 2025.

While considered low level and opportunistic, reported incidents in the Singapore Straits note a disproportionate increase in the carriage of guns, with 27 reports in 2025 compared to eight in 2024. Fourteen crew were taken hostage, eight threatened, three injured and one assaulted.

IMB reports a significant decline in the number of incidents in these waters in the last half of 2025, after the Indonesian Marine Police apprehended two gangs in July 2025.

Incidents reported within the Indonesian archipelago, show a decrease from 18 and 22 in 2023 and 2024 respectively to 12 in 2025. In 2025, two crew members were taken hostage, and one threatened in separate incidents. Knives were reported in three incidents.

The IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) has also expressed concern of late reporting, given that timely reporting supports preventive action and contributes directly to the safety of other vessels in the vicinity.

Howlett added: '*Timely reporting is key to preventing further incidents and protecting other vessels in the area. We continue to urge all ships to report incidents promptly, so that risks can be better understood and effective measures taken to protect crews and vessels.*'

The report

To download a copy of the *2025 Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships* report readers are invited to apply with the link here: https://tinyurl.com/2w242xy2

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European Maritime Safety Report

The European maritime safety framework continues to be one of the most robust in the world, even as seaborne trade volumes and passenger numbers rise. That is according to the new edition of the *European Maritime Safety Report*.

Strong PSC

The second edition of this report, which presents a comprehensive overview of maritime safety in the EU, confirms the strong performance of the port State control system at Member State level, with more than 14,000 vessel inspections carried out each year in EU ports.

This regime is complemented by legislative initiatives such as the specific EU survey regime for ro-pax and high-speed craft, and the obligation for Member States to report and monitor accidents centrally, both for analysis and for the development of preventive actions.

The report reveals that, despite a 16 % reduction in accidents recorded since 2019, several maritime safety concerns remain to be addressed.

FV concern

Fishing vessels are particularly vulnerable to accidents, making them a priority for enhanced safety measures. These vessels account for 17 % of the total number of accidents recorded each year under the scope of applicable EU legislation, and 60 % of the total number of vessels lost.

Misdeclaration of hazardous cargo has decreased by 50 % since 2019, reflecting progress in enforcement and awareness, although compliance gaps persist in relation to a small number of vessels.

Future safety challenges and opportunities identified in the report also include the integration of alternative fuels and sources of power for shipping, while ensuring ship safety.

The report

The 348-page (31MB) report, including a summary in the 24 EU languages is available to download through EMSA's website here: https://emsa.europa.eu/emsafe

Back to Suez?

CMA CGM Asia – Europe service to return

CMA CGM has announced its FAL1, FAL3 and MEX services connecting Asia and Europe, which recently began transiting the Suez Canal once again on backhaul voyages, will return to sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. This was reported by Oslo-based Xeneta on 20 January.

CMA CGM cited the '*the complex and uncertain international context*' in reversing its decision to return to the Red Sea.

Destine Ozuygur, Senior Market Analyst at Xeneta – the ocean and air freight intelligence platform, said: '*Shippers crave predictability in supply chains. Carriers taking the decision to return to the Red Sea then reversing that decision – even if it is done for important safety reasons – still risks undermining confidence in schedule reliability and eroding trust in partnerships*.'

Latest data from Xeneta shows full loop transit times on the FAL1 service connecting China and Singapore to six European ports including two dedicated calls to Southampton decreased from 105 days to 98 days when ships began transiting Suez Canal again. It also saw one vessel slot removed.

Supply chain toxicity

Ozuygur added: '*Unpredictability is toxic for supply chains. Shippers want certainty over when containers arrive at port, even if that means longer transit times around Cape of Good Hope.*

'*Ironically, CMA CGM's decision to play it safe and return services via Cape of Good Hope may lead shippers to perceive them as the riskier choice against their peers.*

'*What if a shipper paid a higher freight rate for the FAL1 or MEX service due to faster transit times through the Suez Canal, only to find shipments are moved back a week?*

'*There is also irony in CMA CGM – previously the most pro-active major carrier in returning the Red Sea – taking a backward step just a few days after Maersk – generally the most risk averse carrier - announcing its MECL service will begin transiting Suez Canal again. It typifies the unpredictability shippers must deal with*.'

Unpredictability could spread

Ozuygur warns this unpredictability could spread across services and carriers. This includes CMA CGM INDAMEX service, which is currently still scheduled to transit Suez Canal on fronthaul and backhaul legs.

Xeneta data shows transit time from Port Qasim in Karachi to New York on the INDAMEX fell from 40 days to 36 days after returning to the Suez Canal in January.

Ozuygur commented further: '*There has not been a CMA CGM announcement on the INDAMEX service, but shippers will look at the decision on FAL and MEX services and fear containers will be arriving later than planned. Do shippers plan for a transit time of 40 days or 36 days? What impact does this have on warehousing or detention and demurrage fees?*

'*Multiply this uncertainty across all services and carriers and the risk of widespread disruption becomes clear*.'

Xeneta provides market insights, optimization reports, and granular freight, service level, and vessel data, which help businesses manage risk, plan more effectively, and boost operational performance.

For more see: www.xeneta.com

ISWAN granted consultative status at the IMO

On 22 January the International Seafarer Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN) announced that it had been granted consultative status by the IMO.

In the words of Simon Grainge, Chief Executive at ISWAN: '*This achievement gives ISWAN a seat at the table where global maritime policy is shaped.*

'*We will use this opportunity to lend our voice to those other champions of seafarer welfare already present, advocating for a safer, fairer and more inclusive maritime sector for the men and women who keep world trade moving.*'

A significant milestone

This recognition marks a significant milestone in ISWAN's mission to champion the health, wellbeing and safety of seafarers worldwide.

IMO S-G Arsenio Dominguez, fifth from left, with fourth from right. Simon Grainge, CE of ISWAN and Trustees.

ISWAN's application was approved by the 34th IMO Assembly held in December 2025.

Consultative status is granted to non-governmental international organisations that can provide expert advice and represent large groups with a direct bearing on IMO's work.

Sharing specialist knowledge

For ISWAN, this means being able to share its specialist knowledge on the challenges facing seafarers to help inform IMO's decisions and standards, while also representing the views and concerns of the global seafaring community directly to IMO. This consultative status helps ensure that seafarers' interests are considered in international maritime policy and that their voices are heard at the highest level of decision-making.

Engaging with IMO committees

It is understood that ISWAN will begin engaging with IMO committees and contributing to discussions on issues affecting seafarer health and welfare such as bullying and harassment, ensuring effective training that works for seafarers, and advocating for a seafarer-centred approach to decarbonisation and digitalisation. By leveraging this consultative role, ISWAN aims to ensure that seafarers' wellbeing remains a priority in international maritime regulation.

Growing Risks to Maritime Safety

An Open Letter by the Coastal States of the Baltic Sea the North Sea and Iceland To the International Maritime Committee

We, the Coastal States of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) with Iceland are approaching the International Maritime Community, especially flag and port states, national authorities, flag registries, classification societies, shipping companies, managers and operators as well as seafarers, with this letter.

Dear Members of the International Maritime Community,

Modern maritime transport is fundamentally built on the reliability of satellite-based navigation. For over three decades, global shipping has advanced by developing vessel operations to increasingly depend on the position, timing, and navigation (PTN) data provided by satellite systems. This shift has brought great efficiency but has also created a new dependency.

The accurate and uninterrupted functioning of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) is not a technical luxury; it is a critical safety requirement. GNSS signals support not only ship navigation but also precise time synchronization vital for systems such as the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). Disruption of these signals is a risk to the safety and reliability of maritime transport.

We are now facing new emerging safety situations due to growing GNSS interference in European waters, particularly in the Baltic Sea region. These disturbances, originating from the Russian Federation, degrade the safety of international shipping. All vessels are at risk.

Equally vital is the integrity of the Automatic Identification System (AIS), which plays a key role in traffic coordination, enhances situational awareness and emergency response. Spoofing or falsifying AIS data undermines maritime safety and security, increases the risk of accidents, and severely hampers rescue operations.

We therefore call upon the international maritime community and national authorities to:

1. Recognize GNSS interference and AIS manipulation as threats to maritime safety and security.
2. Ensure vessels have adequate capabilities and properly trained crew as required by international conventions to operate safely during navigation system outages.
3. Cooperate on the development of alternative terrestrial radionavigation systems which may be used in place of GNSS in the event of disruption, loss of signal or interference.

Maintaining trust in maritime navigation requires more than technology – it demands responsibility, transparency, and decisive action. We must ensure that our seas remain safe, including when systems fail or face disturbances.

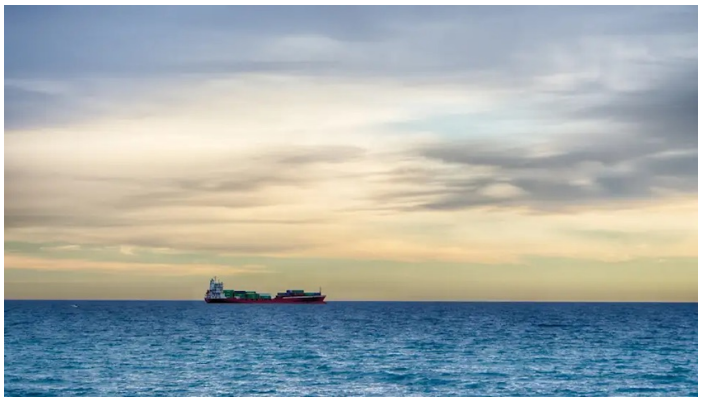


Illustration reproduced from Danish Maritime Administration news website.

DMA ©

Furthermore, recognizing the essential role of maritime transport in global trade and the economy, and emphasizing the importance of safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable shipping, we stress that the full and consistent implementation of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations is fundamental to ensuring maritime safety, the smooth functioning of shipping, and the protection of seafarers and the marine environment, especially in the new emerging situations affecting safety at sea, such as the increasing use of shadow fleet vessels to circumvent international sanctions.

In order to uphold and strengthen maritime safety in the Baltic Sea and North Sea region, we require that all vessels exercising freedom of navigation strictly comply with applicable international law, whether customary international law or as contracting parties to international conventions, including the 1972 Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREG), the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and all other relevant IMO conventions and resolutions which contain the generally accepted international rules and standards referred to in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

We wish to highlight, in particular, the following:

1. Vessels shall sail under the flag of only one State and vessels that sail under the flags of two or more states, using them according to convenience, may be treated as a ship without nationality, as according to UNCLOS Article 92.
2. Vessels must maintain valid documentation and certification according to the above-mentioned IMO Conventions, including but not limited to insurance or other financial security in accordance with the rules laid down in Article VII of the 1992 Civil Liability Convention and Article 7 of the 2001 Bunker Convention.
3. Companies must maintain a safety management system onboard the vessels operated, according to SOLAS Chapter IX (ISM code).
4. Flag States shall take any steps which may be necessary in order to ensure that ships flying their flag only proceed to sea in compliance with the requirements of the international rules and standards, including investigations for the maintenance of ships' condition after survey according to UNCLOS art. 94 and 217 and SOLAS Regulation I/11. Such steps include prohibiting ships from sailing if they fail to comply with said requirements.
5. Vessels, when underway, shall comply with the applicable requirements of the STCW Convention, SOLAS Regulation V/14, and Rule 5 of the COLREGs regarding bridge watchkeeping and lookout.
6. Vessels shall maintain the AIS and the LRIT equipment continuously in operation according to SOLAS V/19.2.4.7 and A.1106(29) and SOLAS V/19-1.5.
7. Vessels must provide information about ship identification and any other required information when entering an area covered by a ship reporting system according to SOLAS V/11.7:

   SOLAS V/11.7: 7 The master of a ship shall comply with the requirements of adopted ship reporting systems and report to the appropriate authority all information required in accordance with the provisions of each such system.
8. Vessels must maintain clear communication with relevant maritime authorities including in communication regarding Ship Reporting Systems and Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) (SOLAS V/11.7 SOLAS V/12.4 (VTS).
9. Vessels shall comply with local navigation restrictions and any mandatory ships' routeing systems adopted by IMO in accordance with SOLAS chapter V, regulation 10.7. Other IMO-adopted routing measures and areas to be avoided designated under IMO and HELCOM frameworks shall be taken into account as appropriate for safe navigation.

   SOLAS V/10.7: 7 A ship shall use a mandatory ships' routeing system adopted by the Organization as required for its category or cargo carried and in accordance with the relevant provisions in force unless there are compelling reasons not to use a particular ships' routeing system. Any such reason shall be recorded in the ship's log.
10. Vessels must report incident involving discharges of oil and other harmful substances as required by international and national rules. (MARPOL art. 8 and Protocol I, International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation 1990, art. 4, Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances 2000, art. 3).
11. Vessels shall carry on board shipboard oil and marine pollution emergency plans as required by

the MARPOL Convention (Annex I Reg. 37, Annex II, Reg. 17).

12. Vessels shall carry onboard flag approved ship-to-ship operations plans MARPOL Convention Annex I Reg. 41.

13. Vessels shall not conduct ship-to-ship transfers without sufficient and timely notification to the coastal state in whose exclusive economic zone the transfer is to take place (MARPOL Annex I, Reg. 42).

The Coastal States of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea with Iceland:

Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia

Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The Seafarer abandonment crisis

This subject was covered on our Facebook, LinkedIn and Website during January.

Another topic of interest to Shipmasters and where concern has been shown is that of seafarer abandonment. In a recent statement the ITF indicated that thousands have left behind in shipping's worst year on record.

By definition the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC) states that abandonment occurs when a shipowner:

- Fails to cover the cost of the seafarer's repatriation, or
- Has left the seafarer without the necessary maintenance and support, or
- Has otherwise unilaterally severed their ties with the seafarer including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months.

Worst ever levels of abandonment

ITF data shows spiralling ship and seafarer abandonment at worst ever levels. For example, Indian seafarers are reported as being the worst affected with more than one thousand abandoned out of a global total of more than six thousand abandoned seafarers in 2026.

Seafarer abandonment hit record levels in 2025, according to new data compiled by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), with 6,223 seafarers abandoned across 410 ships.

In crisis

Seafarer abandonment is in crisis, with the data marking the sixth year in a row that the number of vessels on which abandonments occurred has broken records and the fourth consecutive year that the total number of seafarers abandoned has broken records: the numbers represent a 31% increase in such ship abandonments compared to 2024, and a 32% increase in seafarer abandonment.

It is understood that ITF data will be submitted in a report to the IMO ahead of its discussion at a legal committee meeting this year. This data shows that seafarers were owed a total of US$25.8 million in 2025 as a consequence of the abandonments. From this total, the ITF has recovered and returned US$16.5 million to seafarers.

Per David Heindal, Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section commented: '*It is nothing short of a disgrace that, yet again, we are seeing record numbers of seafarers abandoned by unscrupulous ship owners*.'

He continued: '*Every day, all around the world, seafarers face horrific violations of their human and labour rights, all so that bottom-feeding companies can make a quick buck at their expense. It is very clear that this is a systemic issue in the industry – and that means we need the entire industry to come together with seafarers and their unions to say, 'enough is enough', and take action together to end this crisis.*'

Seafarer abandonment is defined by the IMO under three criteria:

- Failing to cover the cost of a seafarer's repatriation.
- Leaving a seafarer without necessary maintenance and support.
- Unilaterally severing ties with a seafarer, including failure to pay contractual wages for a period of at least two months.

Joint IMO / ILO seafarer abandonment database

The IMO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) run a joint seafarer abandonment database[1]: of 410 abandonments last year, the ITF reported 400 (98 percent).

Seafarer nationalities, abandonment locations

Indian seafarers were the worst affected national group in 2025, as in 2024, with 1,125 seafarers abandoned – at the end of 2025, the Indian Government announced that 'blacklisting' [2] measures would be taken to protect seafarers from ships with a record of repeat abandonments and other bad practices.

Filipino seafarers were the second worst affected, with 539 abandoned, followed by Syrians with 309 abandoned.

Worst region

The worst region for abandonment was the Middle East, followed by Europe. The two countries where most ship abandonments took place – the countries with the highest number of vessels on which abandonments occurred – both of which have significantly higher abandonments than any other country, were Türkiye (61) and the United Arab Emirates (54).

Flags of Convenience

Flag of Convenience (FOCs) vessels feature prominently in abandonment: 337 vessels abandoned

in 2025 – 82% of the total – were flying FOC flags. The ITF estimates that around 30% of the entire 100,000-strong global fleet of merchant vessels fly FOCs.

As in 2024, **Panama**, an FOC, remains the Flag State with the most abandonments (68, up from 43), while the number of abandonments under an unknown flag have more than doubled (46, up from 20).

ITF on FOCs

The ITF has run a campaign on FOCs for more than 75 years and has long warned of the threat to seafarers' rights and the illegal and illicit activities enabled by the FOC system. This has become more widely understood in recent weeks through operations undertaken against flag-switching[3] shadow fleet tankers.

ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton said: '*How many more seafarers have to be put through the misery of abandonment until we see the changes that we know are needed to end this disgraceful practice?*

'*In 2025, we have yet again seen the worst year on record for seafarer abandonment. But this isn't just a story about numbers, these are the people – the workers – who keep our economy moving forward being forced into absolutely desperate situations, far from home and often without any clear resolution in sight.*

'*As we have long said, the solutions to abandonment lie in accountability in the shipping industry ensuring that ship owners can't dodge their responsibilities. The International Maritime Organization must be given more power to play a coordinating role in eradicating abandonment*.'

ITF call

The ITF is calling for the following steps to be taken to tackle seafarer abandonment:

- Flag States to be compelled to log a ship's beneficial owner, including contact details, as a pre-condition for registration
- National blacklisting of ships to protect seafarers from ships with repeated involvement in abandonment cases, following the lead of India's DG Shipping
- Government investigations into the use of Flags of Convenience, as is currently underway in the USA[4]

Case study: *Eleen Armonia*; an Indian seafarer speaks

One Indian seafarer who is currently abandoned alongside three other Indian crew spoke to the ITF about his ongoing ordeal. The seafarer and three of his crew mates have been aboard the ship, *Eleen Armonia*, off the coast of Nigeria, since June without receiving pay – the ITF filed the ship as abandoned in August 2025.

Despite repeated appeals and the expiration of contracts, they have not been repatriated by the ship owner – Eleen Marine – despite seeing other crew members 'signing off' to go home.

The Indian seafarer said: '*Every month we've asked the company to pay our wages and send us home, but they don't care. We're in touch with many authorities, including the ITF, who are trying to help us, but right now it feels like we will only go home when the company decides*.

He continued: '*The situation here is worse than hell. We keep hearing false promises from the company, it's maybe 10 times that they've promised us we can go home, then nothing. The ship's insurer contacted us in December and said that since our wages have been pending for more than two months they would get involved and help us sign off. But then they said they are still waiting for company permission, and the company hasn't replied for a week*.'

In conclusion he added: 'It is become a daily routine for me that I cannot sleep from stress, and if this continues, I honestly don't know how it will affect my health. I joined this vessel quickly because the assignment meant I could spend Christmas and New Year with my new daughter and family – I have now missed Christmas, New Year and an important family event. As seafarers, it feels really shameful that we are treated this way.'

……..

[1] https://tinyurl.com/2j9awwmj

[2] https://tinyurl.com/3jsthubz

[3] https://tinyurl.com/bdefy5cd

[4] https://tinyurl.com/56tmn7bc

[5] https://tinyurl.com/musnwp7m

The nuclear alternative

By Michael Grey, IFSMA Honorary Member

A nuclear reactor, I can recall my father, who was a naval engineer, explaining, was just "an advanced form of kettle" and nothing to be too excited about. I can remember him shaking his head at the decisions to fit warships with gas turbine propulsion, about the same time as I was going to sea on motor merchant ships, which could go all the way to the Antipodes without refuelling.

Today we would describe it as the "range anxiety" that deters so many from electric cars. The first efforts to get nuclear merchant ships up and running never really caught on, and only the Russian icebreaker fleet; operated by the state and taking little account of cost and public opinion, have stood the test of time. But the topic eventually returns, usually driven by fuel price, but more recently by the demands for clean

alternatives to hydrocarbons and "net zero." The recent arrival of the UK Maritime Nuclear Consortium is what might be thought of as the latest chapter in this long and fascinating debate.

Under the aegis of Lloyd's Register alongside experienced players, it is hoped that a regulatory pathway to safe and acceptable nuclear propulsion might be developed and that the UK will be in a position to grasp this potential. It was during one of the earlier periods, when soaring fuel prices raised the topic of nuclear power alternatives that I listened to a well-argued exposition by a LR senior surveyor at a presentation in London. It was a long time ago, but I recall him outlining the barriers which, he said would have to be overcome if a commercial nuclear power at sea was ever to progress. There were few technical obstacles, but the development and capital costs, the practicability (availability of expert staff etc) and the need to overcome the concerns of the public as regards safety remained formidable. Between then and now, has anything really changed? It might reasonably be argued that the technology has greatly advanced and it has been proved that small nuclear reactors are a very practical proposition and can be further miniaturised for merchant ship propulsion.

There is ground-breaking research going on in several parts of the world along these lines, for barge-mounted power plants, desalination, and the like. An Australian designer has proposed an interesting concept employing a nuclear-powered ship to work commercially around the islands of the Pacific and when in port charging up the island's battery banks, saving them a fortune in imported fuel. But despite the passage of years, the barriers still remain. Memories of Chernobyl and Fukushima have never entirely gone away and the questions of nuclear decommissioning remain alive, albeit somewhat shrugged off by the experts. In Devonport and Rosyth, the reactors aboard most of the Navy's retired submarines lurk in their darkened hulls, waiting for the Treasury to grudgingly eke out the next tranche of funds to take them to bits, one by one in a process they never ever seem to be catching up on. And that is a government that drags its feet in this fashion – could we ever be certain that the commercial world, in the shape of even the biggest shipping company, could be persuaded to take on such a burden? So many unknowns. Just think of the way that the oil companies, which so eagerly promised the earth when they wanted to plant their rigs in offshore waters, tried to wriggle out of their obligations to restore the seabed when the oilfields had been sucked dry, suggesting cheaper and more expedient alternatives.

Not an attractive analogy, perhaps. The concept of nuclear powered, ships operating at speeds no longer thought acceptable in our planet-saving era, seems hugely attractive to those of us that mourn the death of speed at sea. But even if you could find a major operator – even a consortium – willing to shoulder the cradle-to-grave responsibilities, and convince some progressive ports in some willing countries to admit these greyhounds, there are still so many "buts." They may be fuelled up for a lifetime, but can the ships, let alone the terminal ports, be insured at an affordable cost? Where is the specialist manpower going to come from, when nuclear navies are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain properly qualified and experienced engineering officers? And in terms of personnel, there are no short cuts to be had with such power plants. You would not be able to persuade even the most pliant administration to grant a dispensation, when the holder of a Second Engineer (Nuclear) certificate failed to sign on.

Michael Grey is former editor of *Lloyd's List*.

This article was first published in *The Maritime Advocate Online* No 900 of 30 January 2026 and appears here by kind permission of the author and of the editor.

Cruise, superyachts and commercial shipping

ISWAN launches landmark new Social Interaction Matters research

Towards the end of January the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) published Phase Three of its Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project, presenting foundational research into the role of social interaction in shaping seafarers' wellbeing across commercial shipping, cruise ships, and superyachts.

Focusing attention to social life at sea

Drawing on live, onboard research, this landmark cross-industry study highlights how focused attention to social life at sea can make a meaningful difference.

Appointment of a Social Ambassador

The findings show that initiatives such as appointing a Social Ambassador from within the crew enhanced morale, reduced stress, and strengthened team cohesion, contributing to safer journeys, healthier crews, and a more inclusive onboard culture.[1 & 2]

This phase marks the first time live, onboard research of this kind has taken place within the cruise and superyacht industries, making it a significant milestone for seafarer wellbeing research and industry engagement.

Building on earlier phases of the SIM Project, this research expands ISWAN's evidence base across different vessel types and operational environments.

The critical role of social interaction

The report highlights the critical role social interaction plays in supporting health, resilience, and a sense of belonging at sea, while also exploring the impact that persistent barriers such as fatigue, long working hours, and operational pressures have on individual wellbeing and the broader onboard culture. Experiences of social interaction were found to vary across vessel types, ranks, gender identity, and working environments, underlining the need for tailored, vessel-specific approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Key research findings:

- The research confirms that social interaction is a core component of seafarer wellbeing, directly influencing morale, health, and resilience. Where opportunities for connection were limited, wellbeing outcomes were negatively affected.
- Fatigue, long working hours, and operational demands significantly restrict opportunities for meaningful social interaction, despite its clear benefits. Differences across commercial ships, cruise vessels, and superyachts further demonstrate how onboard culture, hierarchy, gender, and environment shape social experience.
- Of note, women crew in the cruise and superyacht industries were differently impacted by demands, reporting higher levels of mental and physical exhaustion than their men counterparts, even after accounting for workload and sleep.
- Differences across rank were found for officers, especially those in navigation and engineering roles, who reported lower social engagement. Hierarchies of power, including perceived professional boundaries, influence opportunities for connection and participation in onboard culture.
- Welfare initiatives therefore need to be tailored to the specific needs of these groups.
- Overall, the report reinforces that social interaction should be recognised as a fundamental element of safe, sustainable shipboard operations, rather than an optional or secondary aspect of life at sea.

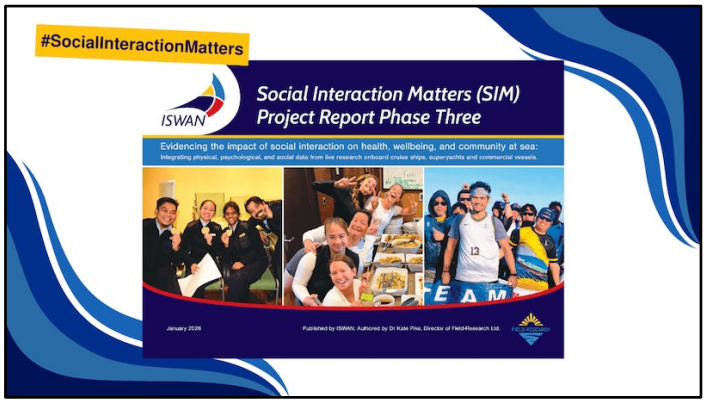
Six vessels, three months' participation

The study involved 176 seafarers across six vessels, with each vessel participating for three months. Data was collected using wellbeing surveys from PsyFyi and SeaQ, wearable technology from Fitbit, and qualitative insights. The participation of cruise operators, yacht managers, and shipping companies was central to the project's success, reflecting a growing willingness within the three industries to engage in evidence-led conversations around wellbeing.

The SIM Project Phase Three report offers practical, evidence-based recommendations for companies operating across the commercial, cruise, and superyacht industries, providing guidance on how social interaction can be strengthened through leadership, onboard culture, and everyday operational practices.

Comment

Dr Kate Pike, Research Lead, commented: '*The SIM Project Phase Three report delivers one of the most comprehensive evidence bases to date on how social connection, fatigue and inclusion shape seafarer wellbeing and safety at sea. Drawing directly on the lived experiences of crews across multiple maritime sectors, the research moves beyond compliance to reveal what genuinely supports health, resilience and performance onboard. Its findings offer practical, scalable recommendations for operators, regulators and vessel designers, linking wellbeing to safer operations and stronger social cohesion. For the maritime industry, the report provides a clear, research led roadmap for improving working lives at sea while strengthening operational safety and safety culture*.'



To quote Satu Lipponen, COO, PsyFyi (Tech Partner): '*It has been a privilege for PsyFyi to collaborate with ISWAN on the SIM Project and contribute to a better understanding of life on board. One of the highlights for us was working with such a varied mix of ship owners and operators, from cruise and commercial vessels to superyachts, and seeing how differently each crew lives and works. Bringing together seafarer feedback with behavioural and physiological data gave us a much richer picture on life onboard. Social life on board is often overlooked; vessels are workplaces, but they're also seafarers' home for months at a time, and that side of life matters as well. Being part of a study that shines a light on this felt important, and we're proud to contribute insights that can help the maritime sector better understand and support the seafarers*.'

In the words of AIDA Cruises (Research Partner): '*Participating in the SIM Project confirmed what we have always believed: a healthy crew – both mentally and physically – is the foundation for delivering exceptional service. The findings validated our approach and the many initiatives we've implemented to enhance the crew life cycle experience. By fostering wellbeing and social interaction onboard, we empower our teams to go the extra mile and create unforgettable experiences for our guests*.'

Katie Lea, Director of Culture & Engagement, V.Group (Research Partner), added: '*We are pleased to have participated in this research, which provided valuable insights into crew wellbeing onboard. We welcome the opportunity to recognise and address key areas that enhance wellbeing and performance for seafarers, such as the importance of connectivity and social interaction. Since the time of the research, Starlink has now been installed across all vessels in the INSW fleet to improve connectivity. We have also implemented a Workplace Culture training program focused on strengthening wellbeing leadership, teamwork, and crew relationships*.'

Y.CO (Research Partner) concluded with: '*Initiatives such as the SIM Project and the SeaQ study play an important role in helping the industry better understand crew wellbeing and the pressures inherent in life at sea. For Y.CO, their value lies in using structured insights to inform thoughtful discussion, challenge assumptions, and guide future approaches that are genuinely supportive of crew welfare. Any meaningful progress in this area must be sustainable and developed through close dialogue with crew and welfare partners.*'

The report

The Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project Phase Three report can be downloaded here: https://tinyurl.com/bdzcbtuh

[1] Brooks, S.K., Greenberg, N. *Mental health and psychological wellbeing of maritime personnel: a systematic review*. BMC Psychol 10, 139 (2022).

[2] *Shining a light on seafarer wellbeing*, Lloyd's Register Foundation.

Approaches to the Humber Estuary

Fall from a pilot ladder - Loss of life

MAIB report

Summary

On 8 January 2023, a Humber pilot fell from a pilot ladder after likely suffering a cardiac event while boarding the roll-on/roll-off cargo vessel *Finnhawk** from the pilot vessel *Humber Saturn*.

The pilot hit the deck of *Humber Saturn* before falling into the water and losing consciousness. The pilot was quickly recovered onto *Humber Saturn*'s semi-submerged man overboard recovery platform, which could not be raised, and he remained semi-immersed in cold water for over forty minutes until he could be transferred to a lifeboat. The pilot was then evacuated to hospital by a coastguard helicopter where he was later pronounced deceased.

Safety issues

The seafarer's medical certificate issued to the pilot six months before the accident should not have declared him fully fit for duty given that he suffered from several chronic health conditions that might have affected his fitness to perform his role.

The pilot vessel's man overboard recovery platform had defects that probably rendered it incapable of lifting the pilot at the time of the accident and caused the pilot to be semi-immersed on the platform for over forty minutes until evacuation, thereby reducing his chance of survival.

Figure 3: *Finnhawk*'s pilot ladder

The port authority's 'stop work' procedure was unsuccessful in preventing the pilot from working on the day of the accident despite several interventions and concerns about his fitness being raised by his colleagues.

The port authority had not risk assessed the physical capabilities required of its pilots to establish an occupational standard for the role.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to issue guidance that non-SOLAS vessels carry an alternative means of recovery of an unconscious person.

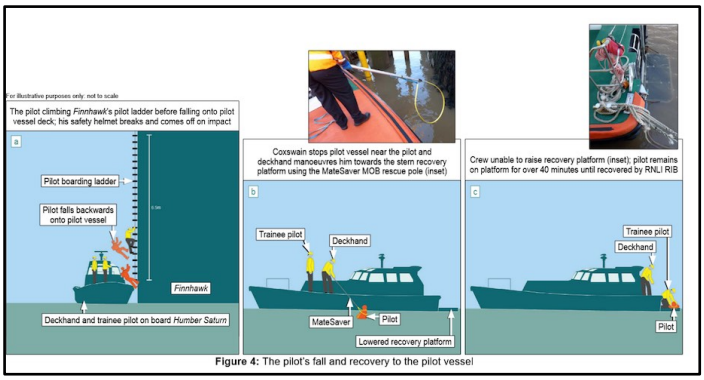


Figure 4: The pilot's fall and recovery to the pilot vessel

Associated British Ports has been recommended to: review its risk assessment and, where necessary, update its pilots' personal protective equipment to improve their survivability in cold water and align the safety training given to pilots with industry guidance.

Port industry bodies have been recommended to issue guidance on the setting of occupational standards for marine pilots and the provision of suitable personal protective equipment to improve pilot survivability in cold water.

Comment

Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, Andrew Moll, commented:

'*Pilot transfers are challenging and potentially hazardous and fortunately most are conducted without incident. Tragically, however, on 8 January 2023 this was not the case and a respected and experienced marine pilot lost his life.*

'*While superficially this was a simple accident, our investigation identified safety concerns across the training, equipment, medical standards and emergency response, and this report addresses all of these.*

'*While the MAIB has been encouraged by the actions of the port and industry bodies to address these safety issues, I strongly urge all harbour authorities with a pilotage service to learn the lessons of this accident and take action.*'

The MAIB report is available here:
https://tinyurl.com/yc3ybury

*Finnish-flag; ro-ro cargo vessel; built 2001; 11671 gt; 163metres loa; 15 crew; on passage from Helsinki to Hull.

Editorial note:

Text here based on material contained in *Report on the investigation of*

***a fall from a pilot ladder, resulting in the death of a pilot while boarding the cargo vessel Finnhawk from pilot vessel Humber Saturn in the approaches to the Humber Estuary, England on 8 January 2023*. MAIB Crown Copyright 2026 ©**

Illustrations MAIB Crown Copyright 2026 ©

Solong and *Stena Immaculate* collision

Off Humber, 10 March 2025

On 2 February 2026, following a three-week trial at the Old Bailey, Central Criminal Court, London, the Master of the *Solong*, Captain Vladimir Motin, 59-years-old, of Primorsky, St Petersburg, Russia, was found guilty of gross negligence manslaughter.

It was reported that *Stena Immaculate*, with a crew of 23, was transporting more than 220,000 barrels of aviation fuel from Greece to the UK. *Solong*, with a 14-strong crew, was carrying mainly alcoholic spirits and some hazardous substances, including empty but unclean sodium cyanide containers.

With both ships laden with flammable cargo, the danger in the event of a collision was obvious, the court was told.

According to a BBC court report prosecutors said Captain Motin was responsible for multiple failures in the lead-up to the tragedy and then lied about what took place on the bridge.

The court heard the tanker was visible on *Solong*'s radar display for 36 minutes before impact, yet Captain Motin failed to steer away from his collision course, sound the alarm, summon help or initiate a crash stop.

CCTV

Film of the collision and resultant fire is available here courtesy of Humberside Police and made available through BBC News:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9dv240w0w3o

Chain of events

After the court hearing the events were summarised by Humberside Police.

On 10 March 2025, Humberside Police received a call at around 1100 from HM Coastguard alerting them that a collision had occurred between two vessels in the North Sea, approximately 10.2 miles off the coast of East Yorkshire, with a crew member reported missing.

A multi-agency rescue operation was launched and led by HM Coastguard. This resulted in all 23 crew members being safely rescued and accounted for from *Stena Immaculate*, and from *Solong*, 13 of the 14 crew members were accounted for and also rescued. All were brought ashore to Grimsby Docks.

Only one crew member, able seaman Mark Pernia, from *Solong* was unaccounted for and after HM Coastguard carried out extensive searches to locate him, he was later declared deceased due to the length of time that had passed since the collision and the survivability within the extremely hostile environment.

An investigation was launched by Humberside Police, supported by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), to establish the circumstances of how the collision occurred, with detectives reviewing technical data, radio transmissions, as well as obtaining witness statements from everyone on board the two vessels.

Senior Investigating Officer, Detective Chief Superintendent Craig Nicholson reported: '*From 9.10am, on Monday, 10 March, the Solong was observed to be heading on a fixed course which would take it through an area where a number of ships were anchored, including the Stena Immaculate, which had been anchored since 6.30pm the previous day.*

'*After reviewing radio transmissions from both vessels, there was no evidence that communications were made from the Solong to alert any ships of its presence or any impending collision.*

'*My team reviewed further data provided by the HM Coastguard which confirmed the speed and course of the Solong remained constant up until the point of collision at 9.47am.*

'*Further investigations were carried out, and we established that Vladimir Motin had been on watch from 6.50am (UK time) and was the only person responsible for the vessel at the relevant time. However, confirmation of this came through our analysis of the voyage data recorder from the Solong which indicated that there had been no audible activity from Motin, or any other member of the crew, in the minutes before and immediately after the collision.*

'*Motin was arrested later that day on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter after the search for the missing crew member, Mark Pernia, was called off and he was declared deceased*.'

Master charged and remanded in custody

Captain Motin was interviewed by detectives over the following four days whilst further enquiries were conducted. He was later charged with gross negligence manslaughter and remanded into custody, appearing at Hull Magistrates Court on 15 March 2025, where he was further remanded to Hull Prison.

Following a three-week trial at The Old Bailey, Central Criminal Court, London, the jury returned the guilty verdict on 2 February 2026, for Captain Motin. He was remanded into custody for sentencing. ~~is due to be sentenced on Thursday, 5 February 2026.~~

Detective Chief Superintendent Craig Nicholson continued: '*Vladmir Motin was the master of the Solong, and the only person on watch at the time of the collision, he had a responsibility and a duty of care for the safety of his crew, his vessel, and also for the safety of other vessels in his vicinity. Captain Motin completely failed in this duty, causing the death of one of his own crew and endangering the remaining lives of the crews of both vessels.*

'*I welcome the jury's verdict in this case and thank them for their careful examination of the evidence, which was both complex and significant. I sincerely hope that this verdict will provide some solace to the family of Mark Pernia.*

'*Mark Pernia was a merchant sailor who tragically died whilst doing his job, but he was also a beloved husband and a father to two young children, and his entire family have been devastated by his loss. I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt condolences to Mark's family, and my gratitude for their patience and understanding throughout this lengthy investigation.*

'*Had it not been for the valiant rescue efforts led by His Majesty's Coastguard, the loss of life would undoubtedly have been far greater, and the wider environmental impact could have been catastrophic. I would like to formally recognise and thank the brave efforts of all those engaged in the rescue, recovery, and salvage operations.*

'*I would also like to thank my investigation team and our partners for their unwavering commitment and professionalism throughout. It is through their hard work and determination in establishing the facts of the case, that Vladimir Motin has been brought to justice today.*

'*This was a tragic and unnecessary death, and I hope that the verdict will act as a stark reminder as to the responsibilities held to all those who operate at sea, and that future tragedies can be prevented*.'

The Crown Prosecution Service's case

Michael Gregory, Senior Specialist Crown Prosecutor at the Crown Prosecution Service, said: '*This was a tragic, and entirely avoidable death of a member of crew caused by truly, exceptionally bad negligence.*

'*Mark Pernia was just going about his day-to-day work. It is with great sadness for his family that his body has never been found.*

'*Vladimir Motin was an experienced vessel master who had captained the Solong for 15 years - but this time his actions fell gravely below the standards expected. Vladimir Motin's failure to act, despite clear and sustained warnings, amounted to a gross breach of duty and led to fatal consequences. It is extremely fortunate that no one else was killed.*

'*The CPS presented a Voyage Data Recorder known as the 'black box' and CCTV footage of the collision, alongside witness testimony including from a maritime expert and audio recordings from the ships, to prove that Motin's failures directly caused a wholly avoidable death.*

'*Our thoughts remain with the family and friends of Mark Pernia and all those affected*.'

Building the case: Proving someone has committed manslaughter by gross negligence

The CPS worked closely with Humberside Police and maritime experts to piece together a compelling case to show gross negligence.

Elements to secure a conviction

Prosecutors had to demonstrate a number of elements to secure a conviction, including proving:

1. That the defendant owed a duty of care to Mark Pernia.

2. That he breached that duty by failing to do anything to prevent the collision. He had ample opportunity to stop the crash and he failed to do so.

3. That there was a serious and obvious risk of death at the time of the breach.

4. That the breach of duty must have caused or made a significant contribution to the death. Prosectors were clear that it was the cause of Mr Pernia's death.

5. That the negligence itself was gross, in that it was truly, exceptionally bad. Despite clear visibility and working radar alerts, Motin failed to alter course, reduce speed, or raise any alarms despite multiple warnings. His sustained inaction was therefore proven to be truly, exceptionally bad.

Ignorance of radar

Prosecutors were able to show that Vladimir Motin was solely responsible for the navigation of his vessel. He had ignored radar and tracking data, neglected to manoeuvre around the *Stena Immaculate*, failed to stop the *Solong*, and did not warn his own crew or the other vessel in any way.

No reasonable defence for lack of action

Jurors were presented with evidence showing that Motin's ship was on a direct collision course towards the anchored *Stena Immaculate*. This was visible on computerised systems on the ship for more than 30 minutes before the collision and by human eye 12 minutes before the collision. There is no reasonable defence for why he did not act.

VDR data

Solong's 'black box' data showed no course or speed adjustments before the fatal impact. Expert evidence confirmed that all navigational systems were operational and there were no faults with the equipment. Motin's claim of rudder failure was completely unfounded.

Bridge alarm system disabled

The prosecution also showed that for reasons unknown, Motin disabled the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System, leaving him alone to be on watch as the eyes and ears of the ship, contrary to normal safety protocols.

WhatsApp messages to his wife undermined his credibility. They revealed Motin had anticipated being "guilty". His wife told him to think of an alibi and had advised him to say that he had not seen the other vessel on the control devices; and that he should not take the blame.

On 14 March 2025, when the defendant was cautioned and the charge was read to him, he had said: '*I didn't do it intentionally, the killing*.'

Comment

Malcolm McHaffie, Head of the Crown Prosecution Service's Special Crime Division, said: '*These proceedings underline the gravity of a master's duty of care while out at sea. If that duty of care is breached, the consequences can be catastrophic.*

'*The safety of lives at sea depends on vigilance and responsibility at every moment. The CPS will relentlessly pursue justice in cases where gross negligence costs lives*.'

Text above is based on material kindly provided by Humberside Polics and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Sentence

According to press reports, principal among them the Hull Daily Mail, on 5 February Mr Justice Andrew Baker jailed Motin for six years and told him: 'You were a serious accident waiting to happen.'

Motin had shown a 'blatant disregard for the very high risk of death' and fallen prey to his own complacency and arrogance, the judge said.

INMARSAT MARITIME

Delivering Nexuswave to the Auerbach heavy lift fleet

It was announced on 3 February that Inmarsat Maritime, part of Viasat Communication Services, will install NexusWave across Auerbach's fleet of newbuild heavy lift vessels to meet the German shipping company's connectivity performance needs for its new generation of ships.

Hamburg-based Auerbach has initiated a fleet renewal programme in response to growing demand for its high-quality project cargo transport services and to anticipate evolving environmental regulations.

Auerbach's new 'ECO' multipurpose vessels, which are being delivered by China's Taizhou Sanfu Shipyard, set new standards for cargo handling and fuel efficiency, it is reported.

Inmarsat NexusWave will help to uphold these high standards by keeping mission-critical shipboard systems running at all times.

Auerbach's vessels will benefit from NexusWave's ability to accommodate customer and crew

requirements, with unlimited high-speed connectivity from a single, fully managed source

It is understood that by combining high speed and availability with unlimited data and global coverage, the fully managed bonded solution is designed to provide a seamless connectivity experience comparable to shore-based internet.

This is crucial to support the data-intensive technologies and processes deployed by modern ship owners such as Auerbach which also need to comply with increasing regulatory reporting requirements. The NexusWave deployment can also translate into a competitive advantage said a recent Inmarsat statement.

Jan Boldt, Technical Director, Auerbach, said: '*Our ongoing fleet renewal programme reflects a commitment to leading the modernisation of the project cargo sector by building, owning, and operating cutting-edge, eco-friendly multipurpose vessels.*

'*Inmarsat's NexusWave will support the vessels' efficient operations and regulatory compliance, as well as satisfying customer and crew requirements, with unlimited high-speed connectivity from a single, fully managed source*.'

New reports on the safety of ammonia and hydrogen as fuels in shipping

EMSA has launched two final reports in its study series investigating the safety of hydrogen as a fuel in shipping and the safety of ammonia as a fuel in shipping.

Both study series have been developed to assist national administrations, industry, and maritime stakeholders in the sustainable transition of shipping. The study series on hydrogen includes an analysis of hydrogen's main characteristics to frame which safety hazards, system threats and risks should be considered and mitigated when using hydrogen as ship fuel.

It also encompasses the results of a reliability and safety analysis of equipment and safety-critical systems used in hydrogen-fuelled ships, and a comprehensive hazard identification for generic hydrogen fuel systems and the findings of a risk analysis of two generic hydrogen fuel system designs.

The series also includes the results of a risk analysis conducted on two specific ship types using hydrogen as fuel: a platform support vessel with compressed hydrogen stored above deck and a service operation vessel with liquefied hydrogen stored below deck.

It is understood that the final report presents conclusions and recommendations of a multi-part study, developed to support national administrations, industry, and maritime stakeholders in the sustainable transition.

The study series on ammonia includes an extensive analysis of ammonia's properties and characteristics, and how these properties are applicable as a marine fuel, and the identification of critical equipment and failure modes and a quantitative evaluation of the reliability of ammonia systems.

Furthermore, the study also incorporates the results of a hazard and operability study of a generic ammonia fuel supply system from the fuel tank to the internal combustion engine, as well as hazard identification exercises on the use of ammonia as fuel in a Newcastlemax dry bulk carrier and a mega ro-ro, including risk assessment of scenarios in which there are simultaneous operations in ports.

The final report consolidates the study's findings and recommendations, which can be used for future regulatory developments. See report here: https://tinyurl.com/yc6dbhhz

Safe transport of alternative fuel vehicles on ro-ro ships

EMSA reported at the end of January in its Newsletter No 246 that it had published the first report in the Safe Transport of AFVs on Ro-Ro Ships (STARRS) study series, which aims to provide scientific and technical knowledge on fire safety of Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) on board ships.

The first report provides an overview of the regulatory landscape governing the safe transportation of AFVs, including a review of regulations, rules and guidelines across both maritime and non-maritime domains. Then, the state-of-the-art of experimental findings on fire safety of AFVs in ro-ro spaces, as well as prior research on numerical modelling and simulations, were reviewed and summarized.

Finally, conclusions from the review are presented, including a summary of the scientific and technical knowledge identified in the form of a mapping. The results of the reviews will serve as technical justification for the development of

recommendations in the upcoming parts of the STARRS study. The final outcome of the study will be to provide recommendations for further industry guidance and input to the development of IMO relevant instruments

Readers are invited to use the link here to obtain the report: https://tinyurl.com/3528h42x

Kongsberg Norcontrol delivers new PLA VTS

Shortly before December's festive break Kongsberg Norcontrol reported that it had successfully delivered a state-of-the-art Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) system to the Port of London Authority (PLA), enhancing maritime safety, efficiency, and environmental performance across one of the world's busiest and most complex port areas.

The new VTS system provides the PLA with advanced situational awareness and decision-support tools, enabling operators to monitor and manage vessel movements along 95 miles of the tidal Thames with greater precision and reliability. This includes enhanced navigation support in narrow, congested waters, helping operators safely guide vessels through the river's constrained and challenging sections.

Built on Kongsberg Norcontrol's latest Foresight platform, the system integrates radar, AIS, CCTV, and other sensor data into a single, intuitive interface. Its advanced radar tracking capabilities offer greater clarity and stability in monitoring vessel positions, even in high-traffic areas and complex river bends. This allows for improved traffic coordination, early detection of potential incidents, and real-time communication with vessels navigating the river.

Steve Guest, Managing Director Kongsberg Norcontrol UK Ltd., commented '*The Port of London plays a vital role in the UK's maritime economy, and we are proud to support its continued focus on safety, sustainability, and innovation*.

'*Our Foresight technology gives authorities the most advanced tools available for managing complex waterways efficiently and securely, including enhanced radar tracking and improved support for navigation in narrow waters*.'

Simon Phillips, Harbourmaster SMS & VTS, Port of London Authority, added: '*This upgrade ensures our VTS operations remain world-class. The system enhances our ability to oversee vessel traffic and respond to emerging situations swiftly, maintaining the Thames as a safe, efficient, and sustainable waterway*.'

The project marks another milestone in the long-standing collaboration between Kongsberg Norcontrol and the maritime sector within the UK and Ireland. It underscores both organisations' commitment to leveraging technology for safer, smarter, and greener maritime operations.

USCG NAVCEN

A new home page

According to our good friends in the US at the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P https://bridgedeck.org/about-us/) we note from a recent edition of their *Wheelhouse Weekly: Bridging the Information Gap* that the US Coast Guard Navigation Center (NAVCEN) has launched a newly redesigned homepage at https://navcen.uscg.gov

The new homepage was designed to provide faster and more intuitive access to critical safety information and operational services, along with improved navigation and information discovery, enabling mariners, industry partners, and stakeholders to access content with fewer clicks.

Furthermore, the new homepage places emphasis on operationally relevant tools and services that support timely decision-making and maritime domain awareness.

New features that are highlighted on the homepage include:

- Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIBs): NAVCEN now provides centralized access to Marine Safety Information Bulletins, making it easier for mariners to find national-level MSIBs addressing policy and regulatory-driven safety matters issued by Coast Guard Headquarters offices.

- US Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) Program: The redesigned homepage improves the visibility of the US SARSAT Program, which supports global search and rescue operations through satellite-based distress alert detection and coordination.

The US Coast Guard says the updates reflect NAVCEN's continued commitment to modernizing maritime safety information delivery and providing reliable, user-focused services to the maritime community.

Feedback please

Users are encouraged to explore the new homepage and submit feedback via the Contact Us page using the link here: https://tinyurl.com/3avuhtbs