



Caring for seafarers
around the world

the SEA

Issue 4, 2021



Making more of the Maritime Labour Convention

More action needed to shift the dial on seafarers' rights **By Felicity Landon**

When the International Labour Organization's Maritime Labour Convention 2006 entered into force in 2013, it was hailed as a breakthrough; this was the regulation that brought together dozens of scattered instruments around seafarers' rights and welfare, while providing a level playing field when it comes to enforcement.

Where are we now? Jacqueline Smith, maritime coordinator for the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), says the great win from MLC 2006 was that this was a convention with teeth; it created a level playing field thanks to high ratification. "Even if a flag State hadn't ratified it, if one of its ships came into a port where MLC had been ratified, there were powers to stop it there." Overall, she says, MLC is working better now than it was in the early days.

However, the ITF does have concerns about non-compliance with hours

of work and rest, and associated falsification of logbooks. "Ships are supposed to keep a log and workers have to sign off to say they had those hours of work and rest. But there are some trades we are aware of, particularly self-handling vessels, where the tight turnaround in ports and decreasing manning levels mean it is not possible to adhere to the hours of rest that they should have."

Seafarers are concerned that if they say anything, they won't be rehired, says Smith. "That still happens; it is not out in the open that they say 'don't hire that person', but the manning agent can have a little star by a seafarer's name which means they won't be hired."

Sixth sense

When an ITF inspector boards a vessel, they can often sense from the atmosphere that something is wrong, she says – per-

haps the captain is nervous about letting them look at the logbook, or there are signs of fatigue and anxiety among crew. Checking the records, the inspector can see where the vessel has been and when, if the crew were doing the lashing/unlashing or lifting of cargo and whether the hours of work and rest recorded were even possible within the schedule.

The ITF is opposed to seafarers handling cargo, although Smith acknowledges that this can't be avoided in small ports where there are no dock workers available. "If seafarers have to do the work, they need to be properly trained and provided with the appropriate equipment, and hours of work and rest must be taken into account. They are effectively doing two jobs."

Crewing levels were not at the level they should be even before the pandemic, she says. "Flag States have a minimum requirement but that is meant to be for when alongside or at anchorage, not >>

out on the high seas. The minimum is not an operational minimum; you can get from A to B, but it doesn't allow for all the tasks that have to be done."

When the World Maritime University (WMU) carried out research into underreporting of work hours or adjustment of work/rest hour records, the title it chose for its report was 'A Culture of Adjustment'.

Its research indicated that the principles in the IMO Resolution A.1047(27) for establishing minimum safe manning "are not adhered to in most instances".

"It was apparent that flag States do not always fulfil their responsibilities, nor do they necessarily ensure that shipowners carry out theirs with regards to efficient and sufficient manning of ships. This results in an imbalance between workload and the number of personnel available to complete the diversity of onboard tasks," says the report.

The research found a 'culture of adjustment' among seafarers. "Work hours are either underreported or work/rest hour records are adjusted to facilitate compliance."

Adjustment of records was found to extend beyond work/rest hour records, said the WMU. "Participants were of the opinion that any record has the potential to be adjusted, pointing out a number of records that are susceptible to adjustment practices. They include records of planned maintenance, drills, oil record book entries, checklists and risk assessments, and even official logbook entries."

Eighty-five per cent of seafarers interviewed attributed adjustments to insufficient manning levels, particularly during activities in ports, the quick succession of ports and when their vessel operates on the six hours on/six hours off watch system, the WMU found.

"Other factors indicated as encouraging recording malpractices include fear of sanctions from shore management, especially considering employment insecurities, and consequences of failing third-party inspections. Financial incentives such as bonuses or overtime, meeting key performance indicators, and the nature of recording software were also mentioned as contributing factors resulting in recording malpractices. For seafarers, the sole objective of recording work/rest hours is to confirm compliance to avoid disruptions to vessel operations and not to confirm actual working time on board. They seem unable to prioritise their allegiance: ship interests or regulations."

Flag state solutions

Jonathan Warring, senior legal assistant at the ITF, says seafarers are very vulnerable when away from home. "Refusal of an order is a fireable offence at sea. You don't want to get on the wrong side of the captain," he says.

He wants to see flag states take more action in terms of inspection of vessels and ensuring that records are kept up to date. "On a well-run vessel, everyone works to the exact hours they are supposed to work, but this is a hard thing to detect."

When the WMU report was presented to the ILO's most recent MLC meeting, "ship owners were very strongly in denial of this as an issue", says Warring. "Obviously these ship owners are from the groups that represent ship owners at the ILO, and are highly likely to be the ones that are compliant. But they have to be aware that there are less-than-perfect operators within their industry. I would hope they take a position that this has to be stopped.

"Surely it is in their best interests for

poor operators to be out of the industry; it improves their business and drives better operations. The wider industry has a role to play as well in terms of good operators either supporting seafarers reporting issues, or exposing where they cross paths with bad operators."

As it is, seafarers tend to accept the ship culture of a level of double book-keeping – "there is a tendency to fall in line with that if it is happening", says Warring. "It does take a lot of bravery for a seafarer to report it. If an ITF inspector comes on board after a specific complaint, it is hard to follow up without naming the person who complained or asking to see the records of that specific person."

Compounded by Covid

Controlling and enforcing hours of work/rest was already a challenge before the pandemic compounded the difficulties, says Brandt Wagner, head of the ILO's transport and maritime unit. In the context of Covid-19 and the crisis around crew changes, the discussions about fatigue and rest have not focused so much on daily hours of rest and hours of work but more on the duration of time on vessels, he points out. "So, it is not only how much you work each day, but if you work those hours every day for a whole year, for example."

The general sense is that during the pandemic the MLC hasn't been fully applied by countries. "There were excuses in the beginning – 'we can't do anything', etc. But as the virus went on, this was no longer a surprise situation. The big question for the industry is how long you can remain on ships, and the focus turned to port States which would not allow seafarers to leave their ships or travel."

Seafarers' hours are long compared with other sectors, adds Wagner, and he warns about the risks of being right at the edge all the time, constantly working people to the maximum. "The result is seafarers burning out, fatigue, mental health issues and health issues in general."

In October (2021), the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) and Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) launched a new code of conduct and self-assessment tool which has been developed to protect the human rights and welfare of the world's nearly two million seafarers (see *Delivering on seafarers' rights*, page 7).

The partners said that the initiative goes beyond the MLC to focus on the full spectrum of seafarers' rights and wellbeing, from fair terms of employment and minimum crewing levels to the



Seafarers' hours are long compared with other sectors



Managers and ship owners have a responsibility to ensure that seafarers are properly rested

“On a well-run vessel, everyone works to the exact hours they are supposed to work, but this is a hard thing to detect”

management of grievance mechanisms. It followed eight months of consultation with ship owners, operators, cargo owners, seafarers’ associations and others.

Among the SSI members involved, Simon Bennett, general manager – sustainable development at Swire Shipping, says: “The code of conduct is an attempt to include many of the areas that are not included in the MLC. This new code is voluntary but we hope it will be enforced by all the leaders in the shipping value chain – primarily the charterers, the big-name shippers, who take the extra step to protect their reputation, making sure they ship only with shipping companies that fully respect the rights of seafarers and do the right things when ships are recycled at the end of their life.”

Poor practices

Bennett says that before MLC he saw instances first-hand such as when a crew agreement was coming to an end and the local agent brought the crew into the captain’s cabin one by one, trying to get them to sign on to the new agreement first, then giving them another piece of paper to sign off the old agreement. “This was effectively enslavement.”

MLC was a very worthy instrument with very good intentions and was in many ways long overdue, he adds, but it covers “nowhere near all the areas we should be covering to respect the basic human rights of seafarers”.

As a result of Covid-19, there have been many cases reported of ships waiting many weeks and months in ports around the world to work the cargo and do crew changes and they have not been allowed to do so, says Bennett. “When they ask to go to another country, they are told ‘if you leave you will lose your place in the queue’. There is no way that seafarers should be locked into their workplace and made to work longer than 12, 13, 14 months. No other work sector would accept this, so why should we expect it of seafarers?”

More vetting and more regulatory enforcement are required to treat seafarers better, he says. “The MLC must be fully enforced by every port State, every flag State and every company to give a basic minimum baseline – but we are not even there yet and, even if enforced, it doesn’t go far enough.

“We all need to do the right thing both because it is the right moral thing to do and for our reputation. Whether pressure comes from the bottom (consumers), middle, or top, the more we can raise the profile and deliver moral persuasion that the right thing should be done, the better.”

He warns that the pandemic has led to ‘the great resignation’. “It is now very difficult to convince seafarers to go back to sea because they have seen the way they can be treated. We have moved from a buyers’ market to a sellers’ market. Seafarers see that they can get better

pay elsewhere; it has definitely flipped. And if we lose access to our best, most competent, certified, experienced people, whether from India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, South Africa or wherever, it would drag the whole industry down.”

Shared responsibility

The ITF’s Smith says employers, ship managers and ship owners all have a responsibility to ensure that seafarers are properly rested and that everything is in order. Even cargo owners should be responsible, because they should be concerned about their cargo being shipped on vessels and about the humans entrusted with their cargo, she says.

Therefore, it should be commercially beneficial for companies to be upfront and doing the right thing. “We want to make sure that environmental social governance isn’t just a nice piece of paper in your annual report while there is no real progress on how it is being implemented. There needs to be some sort of benchmark.”

The SSI/IHRB Code of Conduct is a start, she says, although she is concerned about self-assessment. “That requires that companies are transparent and honest; how do you monitor that?”

In the end, she says, it’s well known that fatigue and human error are major concerns when it comes to the safety of crew, navigation and the environment. She suggests that technology could be used in some way to monitor hours of work and rest.

However, Bennett cautions that solutions such as trackers would turn even more seafarers off. “Morally we should never go down that route. Yes, the tech is there for things such as facial recognition or electronic bracelets, but seafarers are so put upon already; tracking them electronically is absolutely the wrong approach.”

The ITF’s Warring says Port State Control inspectors need to be aware of the issues and ensure that hours of work and rest are complied with. “I am sure they do those checks but perhaps we need to look at how and what questions they are asking. Are they just looking at the records and seeing happy numbers?”

One thing you very rarely see is any kind of sanction or penalty from the flag for breach of MLC, he adds. “It is the flag’s job to ensure that MLC is complied with on the ships it registers, whether it chooses to employ carrot or stick. The problem is, some ship owners who feel there is too much pressure will simply change flag.”

How vaccines are getting onto vessels

Seattle has found novel ways to help seafarers get their Covid protection

By Verity Relph

As key workers who are vital to the global economy, there can be little argument against seafarers being prioritised for the Covid-19 vaccine. Yet despite significant progress in the second half of 2021, there is still a long way to go. The great disparity from country to country in vaccination availability and shore leave restrictions, together with the peripatetic nature of life at sea, mean that receiving one, let alone two, doses of the vaccine remains a challenge.

The Mission to Seafarers and other local seafarers' welfare organisations have been assisting where they can with facilitating vaccinations for visiting crews. Where possible, seafarers are being taken to local pharmacies and health providers and, in some places, being vaccinated on board ship.

One port which has seen a very successful vaccination programme for seafarers get off the ground is Seattle.

It all started with a phone call in late April of this year. The director of strategic operations for the Northwest Seaport Alliance reached out to Cristi Chapman, executive director of the Seattle Seafarers Center, suggesting a partnership with the Tacoma Seafarers' Center and Discovery Health MD, a local clinic specialising in providing medical support to vessels at sea. By May 11, the first crew had received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Prior to the pandemic, Discovery Health had worked closely with the Alaska and Pacific Northwest seafood industries, and, because of this, they had a good relationship with the Washington

“Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as we can. Please, if people are coming through the Puget Sound area, reach out to us.”



Seafarers proudly show their vaccination certificate

State Department of Health. This put them in a good position to run testing and vaccine programmes for the state when Covid struck.

Helping seafarers

CEO and founder of Discovery Health MD, Dr Ann Jarris, interim COO, Andrew Eaton, and director of immunisations, Taylor Pellizzari, spoke with *The Sea* about their seafarer vaccination programme and their partnership with the Seattle Seafarers Center.

As Jarris explains: “We were getting requests for vaccines for foreign seafarers, who were eligible but couldn't get ashore to receive the vaccine. Washington state realised how important the marine economy is and how important foreign seafarers are to the economy and worked with us to prioritise vaccines for them. We were able to train staff to go out on launches and board vessels. Because we had such a

good relationship with the Department of Health and because the seafood industry had been so well organised, we had all the pieces in place when we were asked to do it.”

Pellizzari adds how important the partnership with Seattle Seafarers Center has been: “We met with Cristi Chapman and things took off from there. Both the Seattle and Tacoma seafarers centres have been a great partnership with us. They communicate to the dispatch and to the seafarers themselves, giving the message about Discovery Health and the opportunity to receive the free vaccine on board. It has definitely helped spread the word and got the vaccines to a population that logistically is hard to reach.”

The company have four full-time mobile vaccination teams that operate seven days a week across Puget Sound and the waters of Washington. They offer the Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, with most seafarers opting for the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. “The majority (98%) choose to receive J&J,” says Pellizzari, “as it's a single dose vaccine and logistically that makes the most sense for them. But if they do request a different type, such as a second dose of Pfizer, we can sort that for them.”

Captain Ranjan gets his jab



Vessels coming into the Port of Seattle can reach out to the Seafarers Center or contact Discovery Health directly. “The captain or their agents let us know when they’re going to be in town, how many crew they have on board, and they work with our scheduling team to find a time that aligns with their schedule,” explains Pellizzari. “We can also do launch rides if they’re at anchor and that’s the only opportunity for them to receive vaccines.”

They also have a static site in the port at Pier 90 and the Seattle Center has been providing transport for those able to get ashore for their vaccinations.

Programme success

Since starting the partnership, 3,190 seafarers had been vaccinated as of October 2021. Booster shots are now available as well. The programme has meant that these crews are safer and more protected, and that shore leave and returning home to see loved ones become closer realities once more.

Having a unified approach has been key to the success of the programme. A crucial aspect was finding people who had the ability to both find access to vaccines for seafarers and the right resources and infrastructure to deliver them. Sadly, many ports are not yet in the position to be able to offer vaccines to crew.

When asked the question of whether the industry has done enough, Jarris reflects: “There should be governmental initiative. We can be efficient in doing this in Washington state, but our scope doesn’t extend beyond Alaska. So, this isn’t a failure of the industry but a failure of governmental organisation, so it has fallen on welfare organisations like the local seafarers centres and NAMMA.”

She adds: “Our goal is to vaccinate as many people as we can. Please if people are coming through the Puget Sound area, reach out to us.”

In addition to Covid-19 vaccination and testing programs, Discovery Health MD offers a suite of maritime focused products, including SeaDoc 24/7 Physician Advisory Services, Fitness for Duty screenings and health questionnaires, and an employer portal to track the health and wellbeing of your crew. For more information go to discoveryhealthmd.com or contact them at info@discoveryhealthmd.com.  Verity Relph is a project support officer at The Mission to Seafarers and can be contacted on +44 (0)20 7246 2942 or Verity.Relph@missiontoseafarers.org.

The Covid-19 vaccine: your questions answered

The Discovery Health team respond to some key questions and myths about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Why do I need to get vaccinated?

The reason to get vaccinated is to prevent severe illness, hospitalisation, and death and to stop you spreading it through co-workers. Seafarers are living together in small, confined spaces which increases the risk of disease transmission, and they are also travelling to many places. Furthermore, when a vessel comes into port with active Covid cases on board, the delay, cost and expense to the crew, the inconvenience to the company, and the inconvenience to the supply chain can be catastrophic. There are a lot of reasons to take as many steps as you can to ensure your vessel stays Covid free.

Can you mix two different types of the vaccine?

Typically, we don’t want to mix and match the types of vaccine that you receive, but in some circumstances, exceptions can be made. A lot of seafarers come having had a dose of a vaccine that we don’t have here in the US, so we would give them a second dose of a vaccine which we do offer. They would just need to wait 28 days between those two doses.

How can I access the vaccine?

Getting access is one of the bigger challenges, particularly when seafarers are unable to leave their vessel. In Seattle, we have built a mobile model of going to people to deliver the vaccinations, but every port is different.

Details of vaccine availability in ports around the world is provided by the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) and the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA):

[ICMA: https://icma.as/vaccines/](https://icma.as/vaccines/)

[NAMMA: https://namma.org/vaccines/](https://namma.org/vaccines/)

The vaccines were developed so quickly – are they safe?

When we step back and look at this, we’ve been doing vaccines for over 200 years. mRNA technology (used to create the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines) has been around for over three decades. The reason you haven’t seen them before is because they’re expensive and nobody wanted to pay for them or

to build the cold chain storage to transport them. A lot of energy and resources were put into developing the vaccine at a faster pace, and the amount of safety data is tremendous and more than for most medications in your medicine cabinet. These vaccines are our way out of this pandemic.

I’ve already had Covid, why should I have the vaccine?

There are a lot of differences between the type of protection and immunity that you get from the vaccine vs natural infection. The immune response can be from 10-100 times higher from a vaccine than if you got the immunity naturally from infection. We also know that the vaccines have a different response in your body than a natural infection, so people with natural immunity might not have the same type of protection from variants that we’re seeing. We know that the vaccines are offering a lot of protection against these variants.

I know people that have had the vaccine and still got Covid, so what’s the point?

No vaccine out there is 100% effective against everything, so we’re not surprised to see breakthrough cases, but with the vaccine you are less likely to have severe symptoms and to be hospitalised, and your chances of getting the virus are significantly smaller. Based on what we’re seeing in the US, the vast majority of people in intensive care and critical care environments who are ventilated and dying are unvaccinated individuals.

The end points of the vaccination efficacy studies were protection against severe disease, hospitalisation and death. Even though someone is vaccinated and gets Covid, the chances of them becoming seriously ill is far, far less.

Can I stop taking precautions after having the vaccine?

The vaccine is one solution, but we still need to take other precautions to have the most successful approach against Covid. Vaccines are an essential part of fixing this problem, but they are only one part of a layered approach.

For more information about the Covid vaccine, see this publication from the ICS: <https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Coronavirus-COVID-19-Vaccination-for-Seafarers-and-Shipping-Companies-A-Practical-Guide-2.pdf> 

Rethink needed over international vaccine acceptance

Vaccination rates among seafarers are improving, but we need a shared global standard

By Susanne Justesen and Kasper Sogaard, Global Maritime Forum

For the past 20 months seafarers all over the world have been deeply affected by Covid-19, which has unleashed an unprecedented crew change crisis. A key factor in resolving this crisis is to ensure that seafarers have access to vaccines.

Recent months have fortunately brought about a steady increase in vaccination rates among seafarers. But to enable seafarers to live, work, travel, board and disembark safely, we need to work together to ensure that vaccination rates keep improving and that all vaccines approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) are recognised globally.

At the Global Maritime Forum, we publish a monthly Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator to provide reliable data on vaccination rates. The Indicator is based on data from 10 top ship managers who are collectively responsible for more than 90,000 seafarers across all the major segments. The Indicator is therefore indicative, but likely to overestimate the actual proportion of vaccinated seafarers.

Since we began reporting on vaccination rates four months ago, we have seen a steady increase in vaccine rates every month, from 15.3% seafarers having been vaccinated in August 2021, to 41% as of November 1, with an almost ten percentage point improvement from the month before.

“Seafarers have opted for topping up existing vaccines with other vaccines in order to be able to travel and/or work. This situation is not only a waste of vaccines ... it may also pose unknown medical risks to seafarers.”

This positive trend is largely due to a number of ports worldwide now providing vaccines to non-domestic international seafarers. These ports are primarily located in the US, Europe, and more recently also in Singapore. But we need many more ports and authorities worldwide to make vaccines available to seafarers, domestically and internationally.

Standard needed

Making more vaccines available is, however, not the only challenge. We also need a shared global standard for seafarer vaccines. WHO currently recognises seven different Covid-19 vaccines, but even if approved by the global health authority, these vaccines are not globally accepted. This means that a seafarer vaccinated with the Chinese SinoVac or the Indian Covidshield vaccines (both WHO-approved), will not be considered fully vaccinated by European countries or operators. Similarly, a seafarer vaccinated with the WHO-approved Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, will not be considered fully vaccinated in China.

For this very reason, many seafarers have opted for topping up existing vaccines with other vaccines in order to be able to travel and/or work. This situation is not only a waste of vaccines – in the light of global vaccine shortage – it may also pose unknown medical risks to seafarers. We therefore urgently need a shared global vaccine standard for seafarers, for instance by reaching an



Seafarers need to be recognised as key workers

agreement which ensures that seafarers inoculated with a WHO-approved vaccine are accepted as fully vaccinated internationally, by all countries, ports, shipowners, and charterers.

Last, but not least, we need seafarers to be recognised as key workers globally, as called for by the Neptune Declaration, issued and signed by more than 850 companies from across the maritime industry earlier this year. According to BIMCO, 65 of the 174 IMO-countries have now designated seafarers as key workers. This is great progress, achieved through close collaboration between governments and the global maritime industry. But we need the key worker status to be applied as a fully global standard in order to allow seafarers to travel safely without quarantines and delays when boarding or disembarking. Seafarers need to be able to safely offboard when they need to, whether for crew change, for treatment at a hospital or for getting a vaccine shot.

Seafarers thus need to be recognised as the important key workers they are and be treated accordingly – with priority access to globally approved vaccines in more ports worldwide. Without seafarers there is no global trade, so we need to keep pushing for all governments to treat seafarers as key workers to keep both our seafarers and our global supply chains safe. 📢

Susanne Justesen is senior project lead and Kasper Sogaard is managing director and head of institutional strategy and development at the Global Maritime Forum. For more information on the Neptune Declaration visit www.globalmaritimeforum.org/neptune-declaration.

Percentage of seafarers from the sample who have been vaccinated

	Monthly percentage	Percentage change from previous month
August 2021	15.3%	-
September 2021	21.9%	+6.6
October 2021	31.1%	+9.2
November 2021	41%	+9.9

Delivering on seafarers' rights

Code of Conduct and self-assessment created for a safe, healthy and secure onboard work environment

By Frances House
and Andrew Stephens

The pandemic and resulting crew change crisis thrust seafarers into the spotlight in 2020 and has led to increased public awareness of the harsh conditions seafarers may face. At the same time, we see growing demand from customers, investors, and others for transparent and sustainable supply chains that address human rights concerns throughout – including transportation and logistics.

A sustainable shipping industry needs to ensure the protection of its workforce. The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI), the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), the Rafto Foundation and RightShip have come together to launch a Code of Conduct and self-assessment questionnaire for shipowners, managers and operators that cover the full spectrum of seafarers' rights and welfare.

The *Delivering on seafarers' rights* project aims to support a safe, healthy and secure onboard work environment where all seafarers are aware of their rights and the grievance mechanisms available to them. The Code of Conduct and self-assessment tool include and go beyond the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), focusing on the full spectrum of seafarers' rights and welfare and include topics such as fair terms of recruitment and employment, minimum crewing levels, and mental and physical health, among others.

Raising the bar

The work resulted in two tools: the Code of Conduct consisting of 52 clauses covering shipowner/operator commitments, fair terms of employment, crewing approach, crew wellbeing, crew protection, addressing seafarer grievances and implementing the Code of Conduct, and a self-assessment questionnaire, which provides further guidance for shipowners and operators on how to apply the Code of Conduct. It should be completed each year and show progress, ensuring that the bar is progressively raised for each company.

The tools will help shipowners, operators, charterers, and cargo owners be transparent about labour



The bar needs to be raised for seafarers' welfare

and human rights risks and provide a single document to be completed. At the same time, charterers, financial stakeholders and others can demand transparency and use this information in their decision-making, holding their partners to account and pushing for higher human rights standards as a condition of business.

The focus of the work has been to raise the bar at the company level by creating awareness and dialogue between charterers, cargo owners and investors, and the shipowners, managers and operators responsible for seafarers' welfare on board. However, awareness of these tools and mechanisms among seafarers is critical to ensuring that stakeholders are held accountable.

Clause 7.2. of the Code of Conduct reads as follows: “[The shipowner/operator] communicates the requirements of this Code of Conduct to its workers, and to any other entity responsible for the operation of its ships and recruitment and placement of seafarers, and ensures that it has the legal mechanisms to require compliance by them with this Code of Conduct.”

The work done so far is only the beginning of the journey. Of course, a self-assessment is only as good as the company that fills it out, but the goal

of these tools is to raise awareness, start a conversation between stakeholders and drive stronger accountability.

SSI and IHRB hosted a webinar in October which you can watch and read more about here: www.sustainablesipping.org/news/seafarers-rights-and-welfare-are-a-shared-responsibility/. One of the questions raised during the webinar was whether a tool will be available for seafarers to report against, providing additional information and perspectives beyond those provided by the companies' self-assessments.

As we move ahead with this work, we want to hear more from you. If you have ideas or suggestions to further improve and ensure that the Code of Conduct has the intended impact of raising the bar for seafarers worldwide, please let us know by contacting: info@sustainablesipping.org.

You can read more and download the Code of Conduct and self-assessment questionnaire for free here: www.sustainablesipping.org/seafarers/. 

Frances House is deputy chief executive at the Institute for Human Rights and Business and Andrew Stephens is executive director at the Sustainable Shipping Initiative.



Encouraging equality, responsibility and trust

It's time to take a fresh look at resolving welfare challenges

By Nick Chubb

When it comes to better understanding seafarer welfare issues, I believe there are three key topics to consider: the importance of equality of access for the world's seafarers; the responsibility that comes with control; and the roles of technology and trust in improving the lives of those at sea.

Equality of access to critical services, whether that is mental, physical, or spiritual support in times of need, is critical in creating better outcomes for the industry.

In research we conducted before the pandemic, we found no evidence to suggest mental health issues among seafarers were significantly higher than in the general population.

Mental health issues affect around one in four people. The numbers are similar with seafarers, with the trend just a couple of percentage points higher than in the general population. But the important distinction here is not how common mental health issues are, but in the equality of their outcomes.

At sea, the rate of proven suicides is nearly four times higher than for populations on land. This excludes figures

where suicide cannot be proven because the person is lost overboard, so the real story is likely far worse than these figures suggest.

It is not just an issue of suicide either. Mental health problems, which are often left untreated at sea, actively contribute to the risk of accidents at sea. Seafarers who are depressed or suffering from anxiety are twice as likely to get injured or suffer from another illness while on board when compared with those who are not.

Seafarers are not special – we experience all of the same issues that everyone ashore does. The key difference is that while someone ashore can privately and discreetly seek support, more often than not, this is not the case at sea.

Question of control

My second topic is control. The relationship between control and health is significant. Going to sea is an act of relinquishing control. You relinquish control to myriad external factors such as the weather or the needs of a charterer in a distant office. But you also relinquish control over things that so many of us take for granted such as your diet, your ability to exercise, and your ability to sleep through the night.

We have all learned a great deal about the impact of relinquishing control over our lives in the last 18 months. We have all learned the detrimental effects of not being able to do the things we need to do to get better, and not knowing when life will return to normal.

When we look at welfare holistically, mental, social and physical health are interdependent and linked. For example, depression and anxiety are positively correlated with cardiac diseases and sleep disorders in seafarers. In relinquishing control in the way that they have to, to do their jobs, all seafarers are increasing their personal risk factors when it comes to health.

My final theme is technology and trust. I believe that the world's seafaring community, and the profession as a whole, is at a critical juncture. In the last 18 months, we have demonstrated, despite enormous efforts put in by so many people, a collective inability to organise a unified voice that speaks at the highest levels for the welfare of the 1.6 million men and women who go to sea and keep society functioning.

Consequently, I believe that trust between the seafaring community, and

the stakeholders that rely on them, is currently very low. Technology and trust are an important combination and I sincerely believe that technology without trust can be dangerous.

As the 21st century progresses we are at the beginnings of a radical transformation in how we live and work. This is a bigger shift for humanity than the agricultural revolution, the invention of the written word, or even the discovery of electricity.

As humans we are not very good at looking ahead and predicting exponential change. But by looking back we can gain an understanding of how fast technology is accelerating.

The rapid growth in autonomous technology means that a future where ships have very small crews, or just a handful of operators, is not very far away at all. In the not-so-distant future it is highly likely that we will have unmanned bridges, in the same way we have unmanned machinery spaces today. With the vast majority of tasks automated away, a single person, supported by a team ashore, may be able to operate a deep-sea ship on their

own for months at a time. As that happens, the responsibility on us as an industry to look after those who are at the sharp end drastically increases.

The 'amplifier'

Technology is not in any way a silver bullet for the industry's welfare issues. Technology is an amplifier, it allows you to do things faster, cheaper, and at a larger scale. But it is completely neutral. No technology is inherently good or bad. It is about how it is used.

I mentioned earlier that I believe that trust between the seafaring community and the world's maritime stakeholders is low. Unfortunately, I believe that if it is handled in the wrong way, technology may be an amplifier of this issue.

Technology cannot solve the industry's welfare issues – it only has the potential to amplify what works.

As the march of technology continues apace, redesigning seafarer welfare for the 21st century will require us to pursue equality of access for support for those at sea, whether it's

for physical, emotional, or spiritual needs. As crews get smaller and port stays shorter this includes placing more emphasis on access to support while on board and on leave, instead of in ports. It will require us to give as much freedom as possible to individuals at sea, and to make the best decisions we can for them when they can't have control. This includes a duty of care that covers diet, exercise, sleep and fatigue, to prevent issues as well as providing access to the right support when issues do arise.

Lastly, it requires us to rebuild a bond of trust between the industry and those who go to sea which has been slowly eroded over many years. This includes creating the mechanisms that allow for the collective voice of seafarers to engage decision makers at the highest levels of government, industry, and commerce. 📧

Nick Chubb is founder and managing director of Thetius. Nick is also a qualified deck officer, having worked as mate for SureWind Marine in the wind farm construction industry, and as a second officer for P&O Ferries.

“Going to sea is an act of relinquishing control. You relinquish control to myriad external factors such as the weather or the needs of a charterer in a distant office”



By Carly Fields

Putting welfare front and centre

Industry champions are on a mission to revolutionise seafarer wellbeing

Grahaeme Henderson, chair of Together in Safety, is on a mission to convince all chief executives of shipping companies to make seafarer wellbeing a top priority.

Henderson shared his undertaking in a keynote speech delivered at an Inmarsat-hosted London International Shipping Week panel session entitled ‘Meeting the welfare needs of seafarers in a digital age’. He told the audience that safety is “not a competitive subject” and therefore industry leaders must work together to drive change.

Together in Safety was formed two years ago to help effect change. Its membership is a cross section of shipping industry groups, working in partnership to improve safety and wellbeing. The goal is to make shipping the world’s leading industry in caring for mental health, the flagbearers in caring for its workers.

The Mission to Seafarers was one of four charities involved in the organisation of the Inmarsat event. The Revd Canon Andrew Wright, MtS secretary-general, explained how the pandemic prompted the Mission to pivot to allow it to continue to offer welfare support to seafarers. While ship visits were curtailed, the Mission’s chaplains have still been attending ships, but from the gangway, maintaining face-to-face contact wherever possible. “That remains very important and provides a vital support that is irreplaceable,” he said. Digital services have also been enhanced or created to offer blended support. For example, MtS’ Chat to a Chaplain service put 25 chaplains on call 24 hours a day. Local chaplaincy services are also providing a huge range of social media contact. “Digital needs to run alongside and will never replace face-to-face,” Wright said.

Joining the panel, Mark O’Neil, chief executive and president of Columbia Shipmanagement, added that pre-emptive and protective mental health support for seafarers is critical. “If Covid has done one thing it has acted as a catalyst to



Shipping companies need to listen and respond to the anxieties of those at sea

bring the whole mental health debate to the fore,” he said. “People are our greatest asset.”

He praised the increased prominence of crew and staff onshore during the pandemic: “They are no longer part of an invisible sector; they are being seen and communicated with. That’s fantastic.” Not only do people need to be identified with, but they also need to be seen, be taught to recognise signs of mental health and have the courage to recognise their mental health issues, he said.

One voice

O’Neil called on the industry to come together with one voice to tackle the issue of improving seafarer welfare. “There are various very professional disparate bodies each fighting for the corner of those subsectors but there is not a single voice to engage with national governments. Until we have that we are not going to be able to make forceful arguments with one voice.” He added that the industry could surely agree on some of the big issues, such as

rotation of crew, safety, and welfare. “We don’t need to compete on these, we can collaborate on them.”

Wright noted that he is sometimes asked why seafarers’ charities do not work together, but the reality is that they work very closely together, no more so than during Covid.

Looking for a solution to the problem, John Adam, vice president of the International Chamber of Shipping, citing a V. Group Wellbeing Study, put forward six building blocks to improve seafarers’ welfare:

- 1) Categorise seafarers as key workers
- 2) Improve education and training
- 3) Constantly monitor physical and mental health
- 4) Enable the power of data
- 5) Engage at all levels
- 6) Instil a safety culture

“Covid magnified welfare problems by the power of ten or more. What was urgent then is more urgent now,” he said.

Ronald Spithout, Inmarsat maritime president, agreed that the pandemic has amplified the needs of seafarers and that a different approach now needs to be taken to tackle the issue. “The tech is there,” he said. “If we set ourselves a target on improving wellbeing on a vessel, stakeholders around the industry will see this as good for them – and then the dynamics will change.”

“If Covid has done one thing it has acted as a catalyst to bring the whole mental health debate to the fore”

Ocean pollution... what can you do?

Eyesea welcomes seafarers with a desire to help tackle at-sea debris

Environmental compliance, regulation, and oversight. Fun topics that get the average seafarer and shipping company excited and motivated to get out there and make a difference! And this is what, as an industry, we have focused on – what we have been made to focus on. But what can you do if you want to do more?

It's a topical question to ask as more public attention is focused on ocean health and environment care. It was also one of the key questions we hoped to answer in the development of Eyesea, a pollution mapping app designed for seafarers and recreational boat users to record and chart pollution they may observe on the water.

What's missing? Data.

Eyesea's mission is to use the reach and resources of the maritime industry to gather observational data on ocean bound and coastal pollution. Although there is a great deal of noise and commentary on marine pollution, there is actually very little data on the extent, location, and make up of ocean pollution. This lack of data affects recovery efforts, the allocation of resources to address the problem, research, and even the way the public perceive ships and seafarers.

With around 1.6m seafarers on 80,000 commercial ships, as a community, seafarers can play a critically important role in ocean care. The Eyesea pollution reporting app has been designed for use on ships. It's simple to use – take a picture of what you see through the app, add an optional tag, and hit send. The image should be all we need (and it's not like seafarers don't carry phones!) The image is uploaded anonymously to our charts with an embedded GPS location. The app is designed to upload data only when a user has access to Wi-Fi – so taking pictures on a voyage and uploading them later is perfectly acceptable.

The more pictures/data points we get, the more information we can provide to clean up groups, researchers, and people who want to do good with the information.

Working collectively

I'm not surprised, but since Eyesea kicked-off last December we have seen fantastic support from seafarers and maritime companies. There is consistently the same feedback: "We sail in other people's rubbish, it is getting worse, and we want

to do something to protect our home and workplace." This message comes from seafarers of all ranks and nationalities, and it comes from onshore ops teams and executives at shipping companies. In a short time, we have had around 25 maritime companies sign up to the Eyesea non-profit. The industry wants to help – we just haven't known what our role can be.

Eyesea is also trying to be different (not hard as none of us have done this before). We are offering seafarers the opportunity to be a central part of our organisation as At Sea Ambassadors – because you and your ability to collect data are the most important part of this project. And we want you to get the credit for your work. So far, we have appointed around a dozen At Sea Ambassadors. It doesn't matter what rank you are or where you are from, you can and should be able to play a leadership role if this is a topic that interests you. We want our At Sea Ambassadors to drive this idea among your peers, shipmates, and in your community. Both at sea, and back home.

You've got data, what next?

As we've got deeper into the Eyesea initiative, it is becoming increasingly apparent that our role is likely to be more than just data collection. We recognise that once we have collected this information we have a responsibility to try and

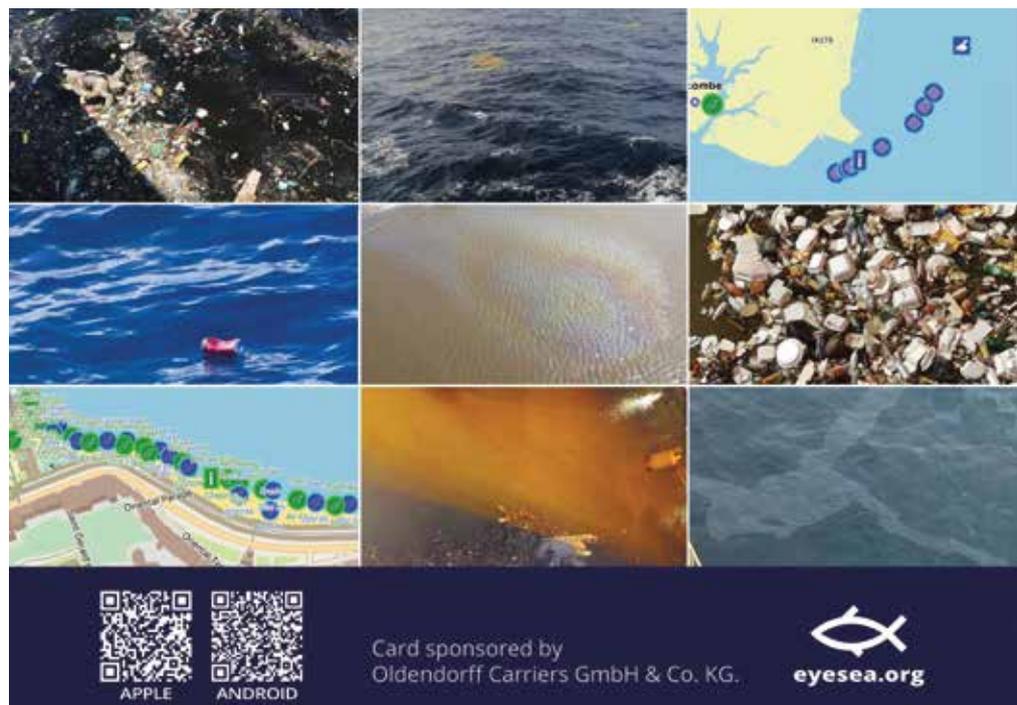
"With around 1.6m seafarers on 80,000 commercial ships, as a community, seafarers can play a critically important role in ocean care"

take action where we can. As examples, we have provided our early data sets to a company developing AI around pollution recognition, we are scoping out a project to map pollution in Manila Bay, and we have provided a small amount of funding for a clean-up non-profit in India.

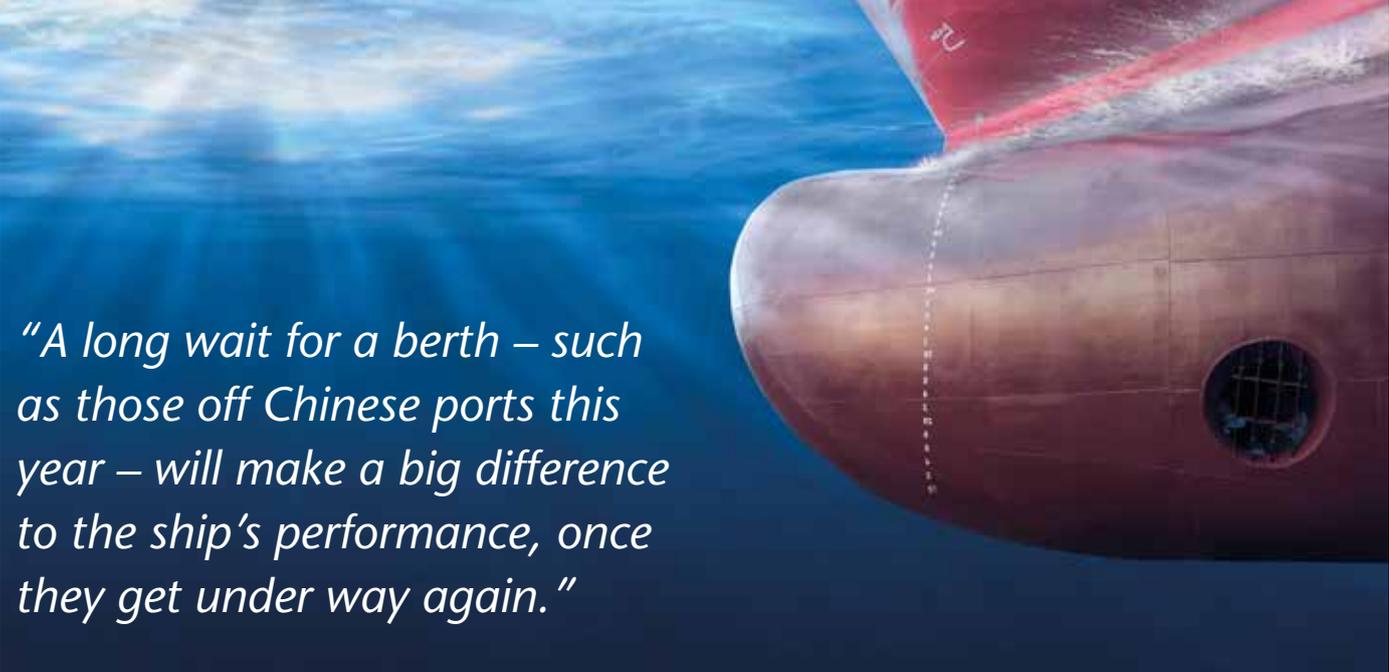
This is developing on a daily basis, and it has been incredible to see seafarers, executives, tech companies, and environmental groups come together to work on this. Because we all want the same thing – and we all need your help to achieve it.

If you would like to be involved in any capacity, please feel free to drop me a note at graeme@eyesea.org.

Graeme Somerville-Ryan is founder of Eyesea, www.eyesea.org. The Eyesea app is free to download from the Google Play store for Android and the App store for Apple. 📱



The Eyesea app allows seafarers to log pollution



“A long wait for a berth – such as those off Chinese ports this year – will make a big difference to the ship’s performance, once they get under way again.”

A healthy hull keeps the bugs at bay

Protection of a ship’s underwater parts is now a big and important business

By Michael Grey

In the effort to reduce the negative impact ships have on the environment, quite a lot of the battle goes on under the waterline, through the prevention of fouling and any sort of marine growth. Nothing new about this, of course – the old sailing ships’ sailors used to drag coir mats under their hulls to scrub off the weed and barnacles, and even light fires under their ships, hauled over in dock, to burn off the encrustations, in the days before anti-fouling paint.

The need to protect the environment adds a new dimension to this battle against barnacles and all the other forms of marine life that welcome the chance to adhere to a hull. In the past it was always about speed; today, there is a need to reduce fuel consumption and thus emissions, but also to prevent the transmission of alien species from one part of the world to another.

For some forty years or so we have known about the need to do something about the living organisms in ballast water, but more recently it has become known that equally invasive species can be carried in sea chests, rudder trunks and various inlets under the surface, where they can happily live during a sea passage. And some countries which are inordinately proud of their pristine port and coastal waters, such as

Australia and New Zealand, are demanding that ships arriving on their coasts are certified for ‘bio-security’ as it applies to their underwater parts. They will carry out spot checks on arriving ships and if something nasty is found under the waterline, they will be told to go away and get the ship cleaned. That could be a very expensive business.

Dual purpose

So, hull health – a term which was recently coined by Gareth Prowse of Svitzer Hull Performance Services – is very important for both the immediate marine environment and the move to decarbonise shipping. It has become big business too, from the development of high-performance anti-fouling coatings, mechanical and electrical devices that protect a hull, to a whole network of underwater service providers that can employ small submersibles to keep the hull free from growth. From divers with brushes, the underwater toolkit now employs very sophisticated magnetic cleaning devices that will remotely crawl around the submerged hull, controlled by an operator who stays in the dry. And because many places don’t want the scrubbed marine growth floating in their waters, these underwater cleaners retrieve everything they scrub for safe disposal. It has come a long way since sailors dragged mats under their wooden hulls.

The modern technology, in the shape of long-life underwater coatings that prevent fouling and smooth the hull to minimise resistance also have an added bonus in that they can save the ship having to be drydocked, which is both expensive and time consuming. The more that can be done with the ship afloat, the longer the intervals between drydocking can be. Sixty years ago, it was not unusual for a cargo liner to be drydocked once a year, mainly for a ‘scrub’ and to repaint the antifouling. Today, five-year intervals are not unusual, with the best coatings contributing to this extension.

Of course, the amount of fouling does depend upon where the ship is trading, how it has been operating and whether it has been in layup, anchored or in port for extended periods. Even a few days inoperative in tropical waters can encourage marine growth, which sounds like good business for underwater service companies. A long wait for a berth – such as those off Chinese ports this year – will make a big difference to the ship’s performance, once they get under way again.

There is no doubt that a clean hull really does produce immediate performance improvements. Even keeping the propeller clean, it has been said, will improve efficiency by several percentage points. Healthy hulls matter. ☺

Putting new cargoes to the test

Not every ship is suited to carrying every cargo type

The exceptionally high demand for container shipments has prompted charterers to explore the possibility of utilising vessels not designed for this purpose, particularly bulk carriers. However, before agreeing to carry containers on deck and/or inside holds on bulk carriers, it is imperative that a detailed suitability assessment is carried out to ensure that the containerised cargo can be safely loaded, carried and discharged from the vessel.

It is essential that statutory and safety requirements are identified, and approval is sought from the ship's flag State and class society before commencing the trade. Additionally, as the carriage of containers onboard bulk carriers may constitute a material change of risk, it is essential to notify insurers in advance to prevent the risk of cover being prejudiced.

To mitigate the risks involved with the carriage of containers on a ship not designed for this purpose, a non-exhaustive list of recommendations is highlighted below, which should be taken into consideration while carrying out the risk assessments.

- Check with the class society if the ship's certificates/documents will require revision and re-approval. These include, but are not limited to:

- Class certificate
- Loading computer/stability manuals
- Cargo securing manual
- Dynamic lashing forces calculation software

- Dangerous Goods (DG) certificate
- Carry out an assessment of the tank top and hatch cover structural strength to ensure that the weight of the stacking containers does not exceed the permissible load. Appropriate measures, like dunnage, may need to be used to distribute the container point loads uniformly and to safely optimise the stack weight distribution. All calculations related to the adequacy of the structural strength would depend on accuracy of the verified gross mass (VGM) of the containers.

- Carry out dynamic stress and stability calculations with due regard to the windage area for containers stowed above deck. These calculations (departure and arrival port conditions) should be reviewed by the class society.



Multipurpose ships are now routinely carrying container cargoes

Credit: AAL Shipping

- Check the strength, condition and application of securing gear and securing points on the vessel. This includes checking and verification of the physical condition of welds made for seafastening purposes.

- Carry out dynamic lashing calculations. Be mindful of the ship's metacentric height (GM) – the higher the GM value, the bigger the acceleration forces in securing gear. These calculations should be reviewed by the class society.

- Ensure that blind sectors are appropriately addressed in master's standing orders, taking into account on-deck containers.

- If the proposed carriage includes carrying reefer containers, consider the provision of power supply with due regard to additional load on the generators.

- Any DG cargo should not be carried unless the class society has issued a certificate that allows loading of the intended DG cargoes. If the ship is going to load DG cargoes inside cargo hold, it is required to confirm the provisions of firefighting onboard. Attention is drawn to SOLAS II-2/10.7.1, whereby, as required and for ships > 2,000 GT, with or without dangerous goods, cargo holds shall be protected by a fixed fire extinguishing system. If the ship is going to load DG cargoes on or above weather deck, the ship should be provided with a water-mist lance in accordance with SOLAS II-2/10.7.3.

- Ensure a detailed KYC (know-your-customer) process is in place for the

cargo booking and that the shipper is properly vetted to avoid any risk of mis- or undeclared DG cargoes.

- Review and revise the company procedures in accordance with the ISM code to cover the risks posed by containerised cargoes.

- Ensure that the master and crew are trained and familiarised with the risks involved with carriage of containerised cargo. This includes awareness of the parametric rolling motion phenomenon and actions to be taken to avoid such a situation.

- Subscribe to a weather routing service during the voyage. The ship's passage plan should address the maximum safe wave height and weather conditions together with advice from the charter party or weather routing service. Subject to weather conditions, the cargo lashings should be regularly checked and tightened during the voyage by the crew.

- The torsional movement may cause deformation of hatch cover panels and associated fittings. Carry out a weathertightness test of the hatch covers after discharging containers and prior to carriage of a dry bulk cargo.

- Lastly, it is advisable to have a Marine Warranty Survey (MWS) carried out at the load port to assess the vessel's suitability for the intended loading, and to ensure that the risks associated with the specific operation are reduced to an acceptable level in accordance with industry best practice. ☺

Capt Akshat Arora is senior surveyor for loss prevention at The Standard Club.

theSea Leisure Page

There are many health benefits to spending down-time solving puzzles. Lower stress levels, better memory, improved mood, improved problem-solving abilities, and better work performance are just some of them.

Sudoku

The aim of Sudoku is to fill in the empty cells so that each column, row and 3x3 region contain the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once. Find the answers to both puzzles in the next issue.

EASY LEVEL

		3				8	1	7
	7		1	8				3
8			7			2	5	
2	5	6	4				9	8
6	4			9	8	1		2
	3	2			9			5
9				2	6		7	
7	6	8				4		

TRICKY LEVEL

								7
9	2		1			4		
	3				8			
		1	8	3		9		
8				9				3
		5		2	7	1		
			5				6	
		3			4		7	9
7								

Credit: www.sudokuoftheday.com

EASY LEVEL solution (Issue 3 2021)

9	3	8	1	5	7	6	4	2
4	5	2	3	6	9	1	8	7
6	1	7	4	8	2	5	9	3
3	8	4	6	7	5	2	1	9
7	9	5	2	4	1	8	3	6
1	2	6	9	3	8	4	7	5
2	6	3	7	1	4	9	5	8
8	7	1	5	9	6	3	2	4
5	4	9	8	2	3	7	6	1

TRICKY LEVEL solution (Issue 3 2021)

7	1	6	9	3	8	2	4	5
4	9	3	6	2	5	8	7	1
2	8	5	1	4	7	3	6	9
3	4	8	7	6	9	1	5	2
6	2	1	8	5	3	4	9	7
5	7	9	2	1	4	6	8	3
9	3	7	4	8	2	5	1	6
8	6	2	5	7	1	9	3	4
1	5	4	3	9	6	7	2	8

Jumble

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to thesea@missiontoseafarers.org by February 28, 2022. All correct answers will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a Mission to Seafarers' Goodie Bag, containing a pen set, mug and handmade woolly hat. Please include your answers, name, the vessel you are working on, your nationality and finish this sentence: "I like The Mission to Seafarers because..."

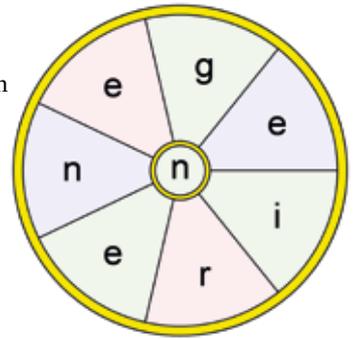
- 1) Hackednd 2) Ectad 3) Avantigor 4) Nbuso

Issue 3, 2021 solutions:

- 1) Tanker 2) Bulk 3) Livestock 4) Vehicles

Word wheel

This word wheel is made from an 8-letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter N.



Answer for Issue 3, 2021 issue:

100 possible words, eight letter word was Starboard

Flag code

Can you tell us what word these flags are communicating? Answer in the next issue.

Answer for Issue 3, 2021: Wheelhouse



See Michael Grey's feature on page 12



I found this in the sea chest, and there was a six foot octopus in the rudder trunk!

Help for seafarers around the world

Are you one of the 1.5 million people around the world working at sea, or a loved one of someone who is?

The Mission to Seafarers is a great source of support for anyone working in the industry, and we've been helping people like you since the 19th century.

We work in over 200 ports in 50 countries and are available 365 days a year. We can provide help and support, no matter your nationality, gender or faith. Our network of chaplains, staff and volunteers can help with any problem – whether it's emotional, practical or spiritual help that you need.

Our services include:

- **Ship visits** – we carry out approximately 70,000 ship visits a year, welcoming crews to ports, providing access to communication facilities and offering assistance and advice on mental health and wellbeing.
- **Transport** – Our teams can arrange free transportation to the local town, shopping mall, doctor, dentist or a place of worship.
- **Seafarers' Centres** – We operate over 120 Flying Angel centres around the world, offering visiting seafarers a safe space to relax between voyages, purchase supplies, seek support for any problems they might have and stay in touch with their families.
- **Emergency support** – Our teams are trained in pastoral support, mental health first aid and critical incident stress counselling. We can also provide advocacy support.
- **Family networks** – We operate these networks in the Philippines and India where seafarers' families can meet, share information and access support.

Our mission is to care for the shipping industry's most important asset: its people.

To find out where we work, visit www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports. Here you can find information about all our centres, including contact details, facilities and opening times.



CREW HELP CONTACTS

SeafarerHelp

Free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, provided by ISWAN.

Direct dial: +44 20 7323 2737

Email: help@seafarerhelp.org

Chat to a Chaplain

You can now connect instantly with a chaplain via our new 24hr chat service. Whatever you want to talk about, simply go to our website and click 'Chat' in the bottom right corner of the screen:

www.missiontoseafarers.org/

CrewHelp

The Mission to Seafarers can provide help and support if you have a welfare or justice issue.

Please get in touch with us at crewhelp@mtsmail.org

Get in touch!

Have you got news or views that you'd like to share with *The Sea*? Please get in touch with the Editor, Carly Fields at thesea@missiontoseafarers.org.

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WeCare, now available online through our e-learning programme.

To find out more about our Social Wellbeing and Financial Wellbeing courses, please visit www.mtsweare.org **Because together, WeCare.**


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Famous men and women of the sea

Award recognises seafarers for their commitment, heroism and courage

“Let us now praise famous men”, says the *Book of Ecclesiasticus*.

I write at the time of the year when we remember the saints in all their diverse forms. No doubt we will all have our favourite saints from history. Brendan, Christopher and Elmo are among many saints from long ago associated with the sea. However, saints are not all well-known and historic.

On the day I am writing this piece, the ‘Personality’ Award at the prestigious annual *Seatrade* event has been announced. Unusually and so appropriately, it goes to seafarers everywhere. Congratulations! I felt extremely unworthy to have accepted it on your behalf. I cannot begin to aspire to the commitment, heroism and courage which seafarers show at all times, but most especially over these last two years. In your own way, you have all been ‘saints’.

You are most certainly among the famous men – and women – who the writer of that passage may have had in mind. This award is a small sign of the esteem in which you are all held.

It is my hope that recognition will really come through the changes that need to be made to address some of the issues that have become very visible during the pandemic. Yes, seafarers deserve the highest of applause.

More widely, though, as we consider the saints, living and departed, known and unknown, we remember the call to each one of us to aspire to live lives of love and compassion. And having the humanity and kindness to take the time to recognise, appreciate and value others for who they are and what they do is a vital part of all that. 📍

The Revd Canon Andrew Wright is secretary general of The Mission to Seafarers.

Seafarers deserve the highest of applause



A prayer for seafarers

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the whole company of your saints, with whom in fellowship we share our prayers and praises.

Inspired by them, and by your grace, may we daily grow in faith, in compassion, in love and in service.

Guide us to your kingdom and grant us your peace at all times.

Amen.