



Caring for seafarers
around the world

the SEA

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An electric vehicle on board was thought to be the cause of the *Fremantle Highway's* fire.
Credit: Dutch Ministry of Defence

Safety risks need to be addressed

Carriage of lithium-ion batteries in electric vehicles and personal devices needs careful consideration **By Felicity Landon**

In the drive for decarbonisation, the sea transport of increasing numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) is inevitable. It's a reality that is raising safety concerns and driving discussions around seafarer training and regulatory requirements.

Once again, we have been reminded of the dangers associated with the transport of lithium-ion batteries on board, with one seafarer dead and many others injured in the fire on board the *Fremantle Highway* off the coast of the Netherlands in July. As many as seven seafarers were forced to jump overboard, facing a drop of about 30 metres into the sea. Injuries included burns, broken bones and breathing problems.

Nearly 500 of the cars on board were EVs and it is believed that one of these was the source of the fire. But lithium-ion batteries and the risks they present are not, of course, restricted to cars.

Earlier this year, the Cargo Incident Notification System Network (CINS)

produced guidelines for the safe transport of lithium-ion batteries in containers – seeking “to prevent the increasing risks that the transport of lithium-ion batteries by sea creates”.

The guidelines consider extensive measures for the safe transport of “an exponentially increasing volume of lithium-ion batteries, in their various states of charge and when also contained in electronic devices”, including classification and regulation, container packing, landside storage, stowage on board, incident detection and fire suppression, and loss prevention and risk mitigation.

“We strongly urge all stakeholders in the production, supply, transport, handling and sale of lithium-ion batteries, whether as individual components or integrated into an electronic device, vehicle or other product, to recognise their responsibilities in maximising safety

when in transit,” said Dirk Van de Velde, deputy chair of CINS and a board member of ICHCA, the association of cargo handlers. “Our guidelines will create greater awareness of the possibilities of the damaging and life-threatening incidents, which have already occurred, and instil more urgent motivation to act before more catastrophic disasters result.”

Fire safety lacking

Some reports (so far) suggest that EVs do not catch fire any more frequently than internal combustion engines (ICE) – “but when you have a lithium-ion fire, it is an awful lot nastier than a normal ICE car fire,” says Peregrine Storrs-Fox, risk management director at the specialist freight insurer TT Club. “We have seen enough to know that one EV is enough to make a really nasty, hot fire that will set fire to a lot of other things on a ship.”

When thermal runaway happens, the result is the release of toxic gases such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, and a very high temperature fire that can spread very fast, he warns.

Fire safety regimes at sea are “not really up to scratch” for this type of fire, says Storrs-Fox. “It goes from fire detection through to fire suppression – that’s one debate. And the crew themselves are given a limited amount of fire training. OK, it’s on an ongoing basis, but if you think about fire services on land, they are training a whole lot more regularly. Crew are primarily employed to run a ship, not to fight fires, so when they do get a fire, they are already on the back foot and may well have limited capability.”

Land-based fire experts say that basement fires are the most difficult to deal with, he points out. “Imagine a ‘basement’ fire in the hold – the crew are expected to go down ten storeys.”

The industry as a whole is not “grasping the nettle” when it comes to battery technology risks, says Storrs-Fox. “There are established industry gatherings for vehicle manufacturers and OEMs around battery technology. But most sessions are talking about changing chemistries and technologies, how to charge faster or how to get more energy out of less material. I don’t see any focus on how these products have to be stored and moved, and how they are going to engage with the transport and logistics industry and do this more effectively. I don’t see anything that considers

how they engage more effectively with emergency responders so they are better prepared.

“My frustration is that these conferences seem to concentrate on making things faster, bigger, better, more successful from the battery technology perspective but they are not focusing on the risks and the need to engage with others as part of a broader ecosystem.”

The International Maritime Dangerous Goods code revisions are due to be finalised by the IMO at the end of this year, for approval in 2024, but these will not be mandatory until January 2026 and no material changes are expected to the way lithium-ion batteries should be carried, classified and packaged.

Storrs-Fox wants to see improved regulatory clarity. He describes current/proposed regulations as “almost a backstop”, while what’s needed is for the maritime industry to work with the OEMs, manufacturers and responders to assess the risks and how to address them.

New cargo challenges

With questions increasingly being asked about fire safety on board as the demand for electric vehicles grows, The Swedish Club organised two webinars entitled ‘Fire! Electric vehicles on board – should we be worried?’ and ‘Fire II: Electric vehicles on board – being prepared’.

The P&I club’s claims director, Johan Kahlmeter, said: “It is rare that the industry faces dealing with totally new cargoes in significant quantities, and yet

that is the unique challenge that we face with the carriage of electric vehicles on board ships. These vehicles are tightly loaded, large values are at stake, and a safe haven might be far away. It is essential that all those on board are given access to the latest safety and loss prevention advice.”

Speaking at the second webinar, Captain Filip Svensson, senior safety quality and security manager at Wallenius Wilhelmsen, said: “We firmly believe that transportation of EVs does not present any bigger fire risk at all. We have, though, put restrictions on the state of charge of the electric vehicles that are loaded on board our vessels, and we have restricted that to a maximum 30% state of charge. We firmly believe that the lower state of charge you have, the longer time it will take before a battery goes into thermal runaway. Also, before loading an electric vehicle we will check the dashboard for any signs of abnormalities and if there are any warning signs, the vehicle will not be loaded. We also introduced a few years ago that all alternative fuel vehicles are properly marked on the loading plan so that the crew and officers on board know exactly where they are stored.”

In fact, said Svensson, Wallenius Wilhelmsen’s biggest concern has been second-hand ICE vehicles. Leading on from this, it is not allowing the transport of second-hand EVs, as the risk is considered much higher “and we don’t really know how the vehicle has been treated, etc. So, we feel that the risk for

**SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND RAPID RESPONSE
TECHNOLOGY INTERFACE**

Survitec's fire safety system monitoring and control solution gives early warning of changes.
Credit: Survitec

DETECT **PREVENT** **CONTAIN** **SUPPRESS**

transporting second-hand EVs is much, much higher, and that is why we are not allowing that anymore.”

Safety steps

At the same webinar, Martin Carlsson, who works with Stena Teknik on ro-ro and ro-pax fire safety, said that Stena Line had taken a series of steps in response to the increasing number of EVs. This is a situation that can be handled with training and adjustment of equipment, he said.

At the time of booking and at check-in, Stena confirms that it has a registration on board for the fuel type of each vehicle, as part of the cargo manifest connected to the licence plate, he said. “So, if there is a situation on board, we will have fast access to information on what fuel type a certain vessel has. We will update the fire patrol instructions, what signs of malfunction and emerging risk situation that we can expect from electric cars.”

Traditionally, Stena would be looking for fuel leaks and heat, etc., but there are more and different signs of problems for an electric car, “and we have to be aware of that”, said Carlsson.

The on board drencher system performance is equivalent for both EVs and ICE cars and would be sufficient for suppressing fire on these cars equally, he noted. “This was proved by testing done by LASH FIRE (the international research project aiming to reduce the risk of fires on board ro-ro ships) some months ago. The drencher system will then prevent the fire spread to the next car and has even seemed to slow down the thermal runaway in the electric car. This is basically due to the fact that the drencher will suppress or even extinguish the fire in the remains of the vehicle and thereby reduce the heat impact, the heating of the battery.”

Hydrogen fluoride gas has been brought up as a big concern, said Carlsson. “Yes, that is a toxic gas and is seen in higher concentrations for lithium-ion battery fires compared to other fires, but the levels that are in practice present in a car context are shown to be lower than previously feared.”

The fire suits worn by the land-based fire services following the standard EN469 2020 Level 2 will protect the crew well, said Carlsson, but using the basic SOLAS-level fire suits will likely not be sufficient. “We need to raise the standard to the same level as fire suits used on the landside now.”

He also emphasised the need for



Seafarers need to be able to detect warning signs of fire before they start.

Credit: Survitec

crew training in the theories around the lithium-ion battery and the firefighting methodology. “It is not so different from classic firefighting, but there are different hazards to be aware of.”

Stena will be putting additional gear on board, including portable sprinkler devices and fire blankets, he said. “These devices have their use applicability and limitations which we have to be very aware of, but they would be in relevant cases an asset to us.”

As well as putting in more fixed water systems to reduce the need for manual water application by crew, Stena will make sure that there is full CCTV coverage of all decks. “We will make sure that the areas where we would store electric cars will have the best possible CCTV coverage, again to reduce the need to go there.”

New tech, new risks

While this is an exciting time for the maritime industry, with new technology comes new challenges and safety risks that have not been seen in the past, says Rafal Kolodziejski, head of product support and development at survival technology specialist Survitec.

“One of the most visible trends we observe today is the drive towards greater sustainability, shifting towards more environmentally friendly fuels and introducing new legislative requirements to help reduce greenhouse emissions. Electrical propulsion with energy storage space on ships or electric cars with lithium-ion batteries is another direction



Rafal Kolodziejski

to support new environmental legislation.”

An EV battery fire is different to any other type of fire in that the battery generates explosive and toxic gases, increasing

the size and propagation of the fire, says Kolodziejski. “Therefore, the heat is more intense, and an extinguished fire can reignite at any time until the battery is completely burnt out. This presents a real challenge for gas-based fixed fire systems, such as CO₂. Traditionally, such a system has sufficient gas for just one discharge in the event of a fire. Currently, the classification societies propose that double the gas volume is provided, but this may not be enough to control fire or prevent reignition.”

Survitec has had a number of customers asking for fire suppression systems specifically for alternative fuels as well as lithium-ion batteries, he says. “We’re working with shipowners, shipyards and class societies on this. Traditional safety management methods have often focused on what happens once a fire has already started,” says Kolodziejski. “But with the risks and safety challenges associated with the use of new fuels and technologies, there is a focus on detecting pre-fire conditions and other preventive measures. If fires can be detected before they start, we can ensure that crews can better mitigate the risk and, should a fire start, contain it quickly and safely to minimise damage.”

Survitec developed its fire safety system monitoring and control solution, SMARR-TI, to give early warning of changes and then to enable swift action to prevent a fire from happening.

“A graphical visualisation of the fire systems on board the vessel is paired with real-time status updates and notifications, so crew receive early warning of any changing conditions,” says Kolodziejski. “In the event of a fault or alarm, crew has full visibility of the location of the alarm; the equipment at their disposal; and the ability to deploy systems automatically where possible, allowing them to take swift, decisive action to prevent or contain a fire, and protect on board safety.”



Seafarers with niche skills are in demand

Jobseeker's market gives seafarers confidence

With a lack of candidates, ratings and officers can ask for more

By Matt Bridge

At the heart of the maritime industry are seafarers, the skilled and resilient professionals who dedicate their lives to ensuring the safe and efficient operation of vessels across the world's oceans. Like many sectors, the seafarer recruitment market is not immune to the impact of change and waves of transformation.

In recent times, the seafarer recruitment landscape has witnessed a confluence of opportunities and challenges, each shaping the way businesses attract, retain, and nurture maritime talent. In tandem, we see the wants and needs of experienced seafarers and cadets transform as the market changes.

We see opportunities arise from technological advancements, decarbonisation and shifting sector needs, and new possibilities for career growth. Simultaneously, we face head-on challenges from demographic shifts and political unrest to evolving regulatory frameworks and the human element at the heart of seafaring.

As a business with a dedicated division for the recruitment of seafarers, we witness firsthand the demands from both candidates and clients, where the skill shortages lie as well as where the opportunities and challenges develop in the marketplace.

While the supply of seafarers became stagnated during the pandemic crisis period, we are now in an upsurge period in recruitment, where the demand for experienced seafarers is now outstripping supply. As we see growth and expansion in many subsectors, the amount of available talent to meet the need for these seafarers is now imbalanced.

Businesses have learned that they cannot be dependent on sourcing single nationalities and need to open their requirements to the global workforce. As more traditional seafaring candidate-rich countries have become more developed, we are starting to see a noticeable decrease in people moving into seafarer careers when other opportunities are increasing, especially IT and telecommunication jobs ashore.

Specialist skills sought

There has been an increase in diversity in the types of vessels operating as well as the specialist skills required. Particularly in the offshore sector and jack-up vessels, there has been a growth in the demand for seafarers with specialist skills and qualifications. The more niche vessels become, the more niche the skills required to operate them efficiently and safely – creating puddles of available talent.

As we head closer toward the industry's goal of net zero emissions by

2050, the use of new fuels on vessels is also creating a need for more training and new skills for these fuel types, again creating only small puddles of talent.

The demand for talent is having an impact on seafarers too. There is a definite increase in confidence, created by the number of roles available in the market and the knowledge of an individual's worth. Particularly for seafarers with a niche skill set, they know that they are difficult to find and in turn, we are seeing their demand for improved benefits being delivered by employers. Adding value to remuneration packages through benefits such as improved rotations (shorter and fairer), leisure facilities, Wi-Fi, and the ability to have family on board is becoming more commonplace. In our most recent cruise survey of seagoing professionals, we found high levels of demand for pensions, on-the-job training and career progression opportunities, as well as private medical care for the individual and their families, which we have seen in other sectors too.

The nature of a career as a seafarer can mean that many work from contract to contract, and from employer to employer. But there is a noticeable shift in the desire from employers to retain more of their people, rather than becoming part of a never-ending cycle of attraction and

recruitment. Employers that can reduce crew turnover and focus their efforts on showing their loyalty to their seafarers may become more successful in driving loyalty behaviours from their people.

Application pointers

For those that are job-seeking, we see trends, pitfalls and opportunities in the application and recruitment process.

In the application stage, we see many experienced seafarers using CVs that are either not up to date with their most recent experience or are not set up to present their sea time and qualifications. Many busy hiring managers will not have the time or inclination to ask for more information. Your CV should provide a concise and structured summary of your education, work experience, skills, achievements, and qualifications. Hiring managers and recruitment consultants will use it to assess your suitability for a particular position based on the hiring requirements. Getting your CV right and taking the time to update it with your experience is integral to being successful at the application stage.

In the early stages of the recruitment process, we also encounter some seafarers who either do not provide their qualification certificates or are unable to when requested. A theme we see time and again is that seafarers forget when they need to update their

certificates. It is commonplace to rely on their employer to do this but once you have left an employer, the onus is back on you to remember to renew them.

We have seen a growing trend for hiring managers to check out potential employees on social media. Your social media profile may be just as important as your CV if you are looking for a new job or changing careers. First impressions count and you should treat your social media profiles as a 'shop window'. When someone lands on your profile this is when first impressions are made, so you need to think about what you want them to see.


Be prepared

In recruitment processes we have seen a surge in employers implementing crew evaluations and testing is increasing to evaluate your background, strengths and weaknesses. What we have noticed is that without practice for these evaluations, experienced seafarers are not always hitting the mark in terms of what employers are looking for in skill sets. To distinguish yourself from others requires practice, reading the evaluation questions carefully, and understanding what the employer is asking you to demonstrate.

On-demand recorded interview questions are now the norm in the early stages of the recruitment process.

Again, seafarers must practice for these interviews, utilising sample interview questions from the internet or example interview questions from their recruitment consultant. Simply practising in front of a camera, making sure that you can be seen and heard, and just getting used to speaking without any interaction from another person is going to aid you in presenting your best self to a potential employer.

As a global industry, interviews can take place in many time zones. Something to always double-check with a hiring manager or recruitment consultant is what the time zone will be for the interview. It is an easy mistake to make but one that a quick clarification question will avoid.

It is likely that as the demand for seafarers continues to rise, employers will need to come up with innovative ways of not only attracting people but creating loyalty too. Whether this will come from a focus on competitive remuneration packages, or the opportunity to train and build careers, seafarer employers will need to distinguish themselves in the marketplace. Becoming an employer of choice will be imperative with attributes that are hard to imitate to sustain success in recruitment into the future. 
Matt Bridge is associate director of crew recruitment at Faststream Recruitment, www.faststream.com.

“As we see growth and expansion in many subsectors, the amount of available talent to meet the need for these seafarers is now imbalanced”



Employers need to come up with innovative ways to attract seafarers

A decade of transformation for seafarers

Study finds decarbonisation will have a more significant impact on seafarers than digitalisation

By Cristina Saenz de Santa Maria

With 90% of all goods worldwide transported by sea, we know that seafarers play a critical role in the maritime industry and therefore contribute directly to the smooth functioning of global trade. But with major advances in decarbonisation, sustainability, and technology, how can we make sure that seafarers are up to speed to cope with this expected dramatic shift?

When the Singapore Maritime Foundation (SMF) commissioned DNV to undertake ‘*The future of Seafarers 2030: A decade of transformation*’ study, we were aware of the need to identify and understand the key drivers of change in the maritime industry – decarbonisation and digitalisation.

From this study, we have come to realise that decarbonisation will have a more significant impact than digitalisation due to ongoing and upcoming local and global emission regulations, such as the Carbon Intensity Indicator, Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index, and Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan Part III.

These are expected to significantly impact all ship management, operations and designs, so shipowners and operators must use recent technologies and alternative fuels to meet compliance standards. The study confirmed that decarbonisation will primarily come from new fuel

technologies, which require additional training and skills for seafarers.

While getting to grips with the twin demands of digitalisation and decarbonisation, DNV’s study found that over 81% of respondents require partial or complete training to deal with advanced digital technologies, including automation of equipment/systems, advanced sensors, artificial intelligence and remote operations.

It’s becoming apparent that seafarers must also be knowledgeable about advanced analytics and digital twins to optimise ship performance and plan for maintenance.

Cybersecurity training should be mandatory to help crew recognise and mitigate risks online. Remote and autonomous operations are also upcoming training areas, including operating and maintaining remotely controlled and autonomous ships and drones.

Shore control

When looking at the role played by advances in communication technologies and increased connectivity infrastructure, the study also showed that this will make Shore Control Centres (SCC) more viable and more prevalent in the future. While this may result in a reduction of on board crewing levels, seafarers stand to benefit from improved workflow and enhanced safety and well-being, as well as a stable and secure alternative to the traditional seafaring lifestyle.

The study also revealed that only 40% of respondents have served on ships fuelled by LNG, batteries, or synthetic fuels. This highlighted the significant skills gap that exists in the handling of emerging fuels such as ammonia, methanol and hydrogen, emphasising the need for comprehensive training for seafarers.

How seafarers are trained was also addressed in this study, noting that seafaring has long been an industry where skills from more technically proficient individuals (chief engineers) are handed down to less experienced crew members through on-the-job training.

So, what needs to change? 95% of respondents suggested that on board mentoring (from senior crew members) and on-the-job training would be essential in up-skilling seafarers for new technologies and fuels, while 55% of respondents indicated that senior crew members are either partially or insufficiently equipped to train and mentor seafaring staff on board.

Chief engineers and chief officers should be trained first on new technologies and fuels so that they can mentor and provide on-the-job training for junior crew members, while junior crew members could supplement on board training with virtual reality systems and simulators.

Overall, we see this as a valuable study which can be drawn on not just for Singapore but for the global maritime industry, where workforce issues are becoming increasingly apparent and must be urgently addressed. 📍

DNV’s research for this study called on a comprehensive methodology, combining a literature review, expert consultations and a survey of over 500 seafarers, including seasoned professionals, with 70% having over 11 years in the industry and the majority holding officer ranks. To learn more about the findings from the study, ‘*The future of Seafarers 2030: A decade of transformation*’, visit: www.dnv.com/maritime/publications/the-future-of-seafarers-2030-a-decade-of-transformation.html. Cristina Saenz de Santa Maria is regional manager for South East Asia, Pacific & India, Maritime at DNV.



Seafarers need to be trained to meet the changing dynamics of shipping.

Credit: DNV



Calling time on abuse of female seafarers

Too much of a female seafarer's life is out of sight

By Paul Trathen

Seamen work and live on board their ships, many miles away from land, regular networks and 'sightlines', which most of us take for granted, and hidden between aluminium and steel walls.

At our best, we human beings 'see one another', but for seafarers, it can be trickier than that. For female seafarers, in some ways it is trickier still.

Women make up less than 2% of the global workforce at sea. More visible, one might suppose, as they stand out from the men. But that is not the case. Rather, all too often they live a hidden life, with few or no peers to 'see' what is really going on. And when they suffer abuse, that abuse can go unseen.

The Mission to Seafarers is committed to 'seeing those at sea', and we see the abuse experienced by female seafarers, we speak with and for those experiencing these hidden horrors, and we call time on it.

The Mission recently published an important report: *'Beyond the 2% – Women Seafarers and their Lives at Sea: Reflecting on Our Call to Care'* (2022). We also welcome a report commissioned by The Seafarers' Charity, and conducted by researchers from the Seafarers International Research Centre,

at Cardiff University: *'The port-based welfare needs of women seafarers'* (2023).

Sexual harassment and intimidation sit alongside the common stresses of the seafaring life for many women on ships, where they are made to feel unwelcome by some shipboard colleagues or are actively antagonised or targeted with hostility by others.

These add to the stresses of loneliness, and the imbalance of physical and mental health, common to many who work and live at sea.


Responding to the call

As a result of the findings of our study, The Mission to Seafarers has committed new resources and a new focus to our caring work. In 2024, the Mission will be appointing and equipping three specialist female chaplains to be placed in ports around the world, to be on the frontline to see and care for female seafarers. They will be placed in ports where significant numbers of cruise ships dock, as the numbers of women working in that sector are typically higher than the across-the-board 2% so they will have time and space to regularly see, hear and keep in touch with many women in their moments of respite from sailing.

Trained in counselling and psychology, they will empower women to challenge and confront abuse where it happens. They will also be strong advocates for women seafarers, challenging abusive cultures and practices on board ships that need to change. They will pioneer and make use of digital chaplaincy, keeping in supportive touch with women as they travel across the oceans.

Further, these specialist chaplains will be a resource to other chaplains and ship visitors in their region of the world, enabling other chaplains and ship visitors to both learn from, and draw upon, that expertise.

The Mission will also work with others in the maritime welfare world to produce new resources – printed, taught and online – to help female seafarers experiencing abuse and other difficulties. These resources will be both for them, and for those seeking to care and advocate for them, signposting support and information in different port locations, as well as at sea.

And, at our Mission to Seafarers Centres throughout the world, we will be thinking about how to make our welcome and places of peace more focussed on the particular needs of women. 

Paul Trathen is port development manager at The Mission to Seafarers.

Bridging the gap through mentorship and networking

SeaBuddy platform aims to bring maritime professionals together

By Richard Holdsworth

Guidance and connections can be invaluable in an industry as dynamic as the maritime sector. This is why SeaBuddy, a dedicated platform designed to bring together maritime professionals for mentorship and networking, was launched.

Originating from the Maritime Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Lab in 2022, SeaBuddy answers the industry's desire to nurture connections and for informal mentoring. Its establishment is not just a strategic move; it's a promise. A promise backed by industry stalwarts like Hafnia, Wilhelmsen, Thome Group, Rio Tinto, RightShip, and Anglo American, which aims to fill this void and address the need for connectivity and informal learning within the maritime community.

The value and potential of SeaBuddy becomes evident when we delve into recent research findings. A comprehensive survey of 250 seafarers bore testimony to the collective sentiment. A total of 80% echoed the need for a platform that facilitates both professional and personal growth. This feedback highlighted the need and desire for a space dedicated to knowledge-sharing, advice and support.

The importance of SeaBuddy is important both for those embarking on their maritime journey, as well as seasoned professionals seeking a shift – be it role transitions or transitioning from sea-based activities to onshore roles. Such phases, which often come with much uncertainty for the seafarer, can be transformed by connecting with those who have sailed the same path. With experienced peers offering bespoke insights, the journey becomes less daunting and more informed.

Making connections

SeaBuddy paves the way for enlarging both personal and professional circles, allowing members to form lasting relationships. We view it as a treasure trove for those keen on honing their skills, providing myriad opportunities for knowledge acquisition and exchange. When transitioning in one's career – especially moving from ship to shore – the shift is eased through expert advice and guidance. For those stepping into new roles or navigating industry



Seafarers can use SeaBuddy to connect

“Regardless of where you stand in your maritime journey, whether it is on the seasoned shores of experience or the budding tides of a new career, SeaBuddy promises a space that celebrates sharing, learning and growth”

challenges, SeaBuddy stands as a sturdy pillar of support.

SeaBuddy membership is categorised into two distinct yet interconnected roles. SeaMentors are the torchbearers, ready to illuminate the path for upcoming maritime enthusiasts with their experiences and guidance. SeaBuddies are those eager to soak up knowledge and seek wisdom to steer their maritime journey effectively.

SeaBuddy is currently in its extended pilot phase, throwing its digital doors open to maritime professionals spanning various experience levels. The insights and feedback garnered from this phase will be instrumental in shaping SeaBuddy's future, ensuring it remains agile, user-centric, and effective.

Regardless of where you stand in your

maritime journey, whether it is on the seasoned shores of experience or the budding tides of a new career, SeaBuddy promises a space that celebrates sharing, learning and growth.

Your engagement with the platform, whether as a mentor or a mentee, is not just a service to the community but a personal journey of growth. It's an opportunity to be part of a legacy, to contribute actively to the maritime industry's future, ensuring that it remains resilient, informed and ever-evolving.

Richard Holdsworth is senior advisor to Studio 30 50, a digital venture studio empowering startups to reshape the future of maritime. To learn more about SeaBuddy or to join the network, visit www.sea-buddy.org/.

Enriching seafarers' lives on board

Ship designers should prioritise attractive living standards

By Dr Kate Pike

Ship design has the complex task of considering both the operational environment that seafarers work in, and the space used for their rest and leisure time. By nature, it must be multifunctional, safe and practical but also an attractive and comfortable space for seafarers to live and relax in together. When a ship becomes your workspace, and your home away from home for months at a time, this environment needs very careful attention.

We have recently heard in the news about migrants being housed on a floating barge in Portland, and comparisons have been made with seafarers on board merchant vessels who may experience far less comfort in their accommodation. Needless to say, this is a contentious issue. However, many seafarers have a sense of which shipping companies provide the most comfortable vessels to work on board and which ships to avoid – if a choice is indeed possible – if they have been built in certain countries with a purely utilitarian approach to design. Company reputation and even country reputation based on ship design and comfort is an interesting driver for some, in terms of recruitment and retention within the industry.

The International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network's (ISWAN) Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project research highlighted several aspects of ship design that did not work well for seafarers, particularly in terms of the impact on their mental health and sleep.

ISWAN reported a 56% increase in calls to their free seafarers' helpline, SeafarerHelp (2022) about the ship and the living conditions on board. Feedback on aspects that impacted their sleep and comfort were obtained and some comments raised the enduring issue of the positioning of beds within cabins, with a preference for beds being set up across the ship, rather than along the length of it, to help combat fatigue and seasickness. The SIM Project highlighted fatigue as a significant issue on board all the participating vessels in the Project and a contributor to mental health issues and safety concerns.



Some seafarers have been resourceful in making the most use of the space they have for recreation

Crew feedback

One crew member interviewed for the SIM Project in phase one commented on the lack of balance between ensuring a vessel is fit for service and ensuring enough space for crew to live and work comfortably: "They've forgotten about the crew [is] basically what's come out of the design. All the Gucci stuff for the operational side but actually when you look at living, we haven't got the space on there."

Another crew member interviewed described the psychological impact that the amount of space can have: "I've seen some container ships that have huge spaces for parties, social gatherings... and it gives a kind of a notion of that when you have more space you feel more positive... but when you are in a very compact... enclosed space then you feel very low psychologically."

On a positive note, the SIM Project has seen first-hand that it is possible for seafarers to create fun and entertainment for themselves in all kinds of spaces and conditions on board. The research observed evidence of a resourceful use of even the smallest of spaces. One such example was a game of sack toss in a corridor space behind the crew lounge.

The SIM Project guidance, taken directly from seafarer's feedback about their leisure time, indicates what types of activities can be achieved in different spaces and in various weather conditions and suggests the facilities required for the activities and preparation time, if any.

It is clear that ship design needs to consider all aspects of a seafarer's life, both when they are at work and at rest. Ultimately, all aspects of ship design have an impact on the safety and the mental health of those working on board in these spaces.

Perhaps we should ask questions as to why only minimum standards are set where ship owners strive to reach compliance? Instead, why not set more ambitious but attractive 'living standards', that go beyond compliance, with people's lives on board truly at the heart of design considerations, with the involvement of seafarers within this process.

ISWAN's SIM Project is evolving work which puts all seafarers' wellbeing foremost and will be extending into the cruise and superyacht sectors going forward, further developing its guidance and recommendations. For more information on the SIM Project go to www.seafarerswelfare.org/search/results?q=SIM+project.



Participants at a SafeTALK training session

Removing taboos on suicide

Mission aims to tackle the stigma and support more seafarers in need **By Thomas O'Hare**

With no single international framework for recording suicides at sea, there is a frustrating lack of data on seafarer suicides globally. A 2022 report by the Department of Transport entitled 'Seafarers and Suicide', called for better reporting within the industry and a more holistic and proactive approach to tackle the mental health challenges facing seafarers. Based on interviews with individuals who work with or have expertise on seafarers, it concluded: "The industry has yet to firmly establish and embed the importance of good mental health both as a step towards greater productivity as well as a corollary to physical fitness.

"There was a widespread sense that the available mental health support was often reactive rather than proactive – it failed to seek out and offer support to those that might benefit, instead waiting for people to look for help themselves. Therefore, it was strongly felt that more proactive help would be key to improving mental health and reducing suicide amongst seafarers."

The Mission to Seafarers wanted to tackle the stigma around suicide and establish it as an acceptable topic for discussion. With funding from Trinity House, I qualified as a trainer in the SafeTALK course. SafeTALK means Suicide Alertness for Everyone,

and was developed by Livingworks, a world leading social enterprise in suicide prevention training solutions.

My ambition now is to formalise a suite of Livingworks suicide prevention courses. There is a plethora of reports and articles discussing suicide in the maritime sector, and rightly so. Many use data and statistics to debate the prevalence of suicide at sea, and its ranking among other causes of death, such as onboard accidents and cardiac arrests. Data is undoubtedly important in understanding trends and taking preventative measures; however, we mustn't forget that behind those statistics are people who felt they didn't have a choice. We want to let them know they have a choice, and there are people out there that want to help.

Getting people talking

The Mission to Seafarers' aim is to get people talking about suicide, and train people both onshore and on board as Suicide Alert Helpers skilled in connecting people with thoughts of suicide to someone trained in life saving intervention skills. In the words of our secretary general, The Rev Canon Andrew Wright: "Ensuring our front-line teams are able to recognise and respond to potential signs of suicide amongst seafarers is vital. However, all of us will at some point encounter

suicide risk, even among colleagues and friends. The SafeTALK training prepares us to respond appropriately and has a proven track record."

As testament to that proven track record, in June 2023 the SafeTALK course won a Safety4Sea award, recognising its impact on fostering crew welfare with tangible results. Those results speak for themselves. Between March 2022 and July 2023, The Mission to Seafarers trained 219 Suicide Alert Helpers. Together, they represent a network encompassing 36 organisations operating in 15 ports across the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, and the Philippines.

Of the 219 SafeTALK participants, 98% agreed the course would have a positive effect on their life and they would tell others to attend in the future; 78% felt well prepared to talk directly and openly to a person about their thoughts of suicide, and the remaining 22% felt mostly prepared. One participant stated: "I was nervous about [SafeTALK] but afterwards I felt something had changed, a taboo had been lifted and I could ask 'Are you having thoughts of suicide' without fear." Another said: "I'd like courses like this to be more publicly available, actually stressing the dynamic of asking about the question of suicide made me realise how alien, but important it is to ask."

These statistics, and the very emotions shared by participants, represent an overwhelming achievement for a course and topic many people, including some of those who attended, felt nervous and concerned about.

The subject of suicide is difficult. Heavily stigmatised, the issue – along with poor mental health – is often swept under the carpet. We want to drive action and create a network of Suicide Alert Helpers who can be the eyes and ears of a community, and Suicide First Aiders who can reduce the level of risk and heighten the level of safety.

Additional courses

In 2023, the Mission received generous donations from the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) and the UK P&I Club to add an additional Suicide Intervention course called ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) into the existing WeCare programme. This funding includes a series of ambitious objectives that the Mission hopes will enable discussion and action in its pursuit of preventing suicide and empowering hope.

The Mission is now embarking on implementing new maritime-themed videos into the SafeTALK course. SafeTALK uses scenarios, shown through several videos, to teach people about the TALK steps used to help someone with thoughts of suicide. The new videos will include a diverse

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Between March 2022 and July 2023, The Mission to Seafarers trained 219 Suicide Alert Helpers



range of nationalities set across a range of locations, including on board vessels, in the classrooms of maritime academies, and around port. This will ensure seafarers and their onshore colleagues can relate to this important topic and be confident in having a conversation about suicide.

Looking forward, the Mission aims to provide suicide awareness courses in the UK and across its global regions. With

funding from generous donors, these will continue to be made free for seafarers and port-based communities. Both SafeTALK and ASIST are also available for purchase and can be delivered as part of a WeCare package. 📞

Thomas O’Hare is project manager at The Mission to Seafarers. To enquire about either SafeTALK or ASIST courses, please contact him on Thomas.ohare@missiontoseafarers.org.



New literature supports the SafeTALK courses

Strange places to live

What crew would want their accommodation to be forward on the ship, feeling every movement of it?

The comfort and convenience of seafarers, it has been said with just a touch of irony, has rarely been to the fore in the minds of those who design ships. Nothing new there, perhaps, if you study history and consider that down through the ages. From antiquity to modern times, the crew of a ship just fitted in where they could. The priority of the designer, urged on by whoever was paying for the construction, would be the space for the cargo, paying passengers, or weaponry in the case of warships, as well as the desired speed and sea-keeping qualities. Where the crew could be accommodated would always be something of a design afterthought. The cost of a new ship might also have something to do with it, too.

There are, however, some very strange designs emerging from shipyards and the computers of designers, who seem to have been pushing all the stops in their quest to cram the greatest amount of cargo within the dimensions of their ships. The latest generation of container ships, for instance, has seen the crew accommodation squeezed either to the extremities of the afterdeck, far abaft the sternpost, or to the very ‘eyes’ of the ship, where it can provide a useful auxiliary breakwater to protect the deck load of containers.

Indeed, one new container ship design from the Far East, proudly illustrated by its designer in a

computer-generated impression, has the entire complement, along with the navigating bridge, situated in the space conventionally configured ships would have allocated to the rope stores and anchor windlass. The capacity of the ship, announce the delighted designers, will be increased by some 8%, with the extra presumably being those boxes piled over the bridge and what passes for accommodation.

And there are plenty more illustrations of new designs where the forward accommodation is perched on the forecabin, protecting the deck space abaft the superstructure. Typically, this is for heavy-lifters – ships built to carry large deck loads or wind-turbine blades. It obviously makes some sense to prevent boarding seas damaging the deck cargo in the event of heavy weather.

Lavish furnishing?

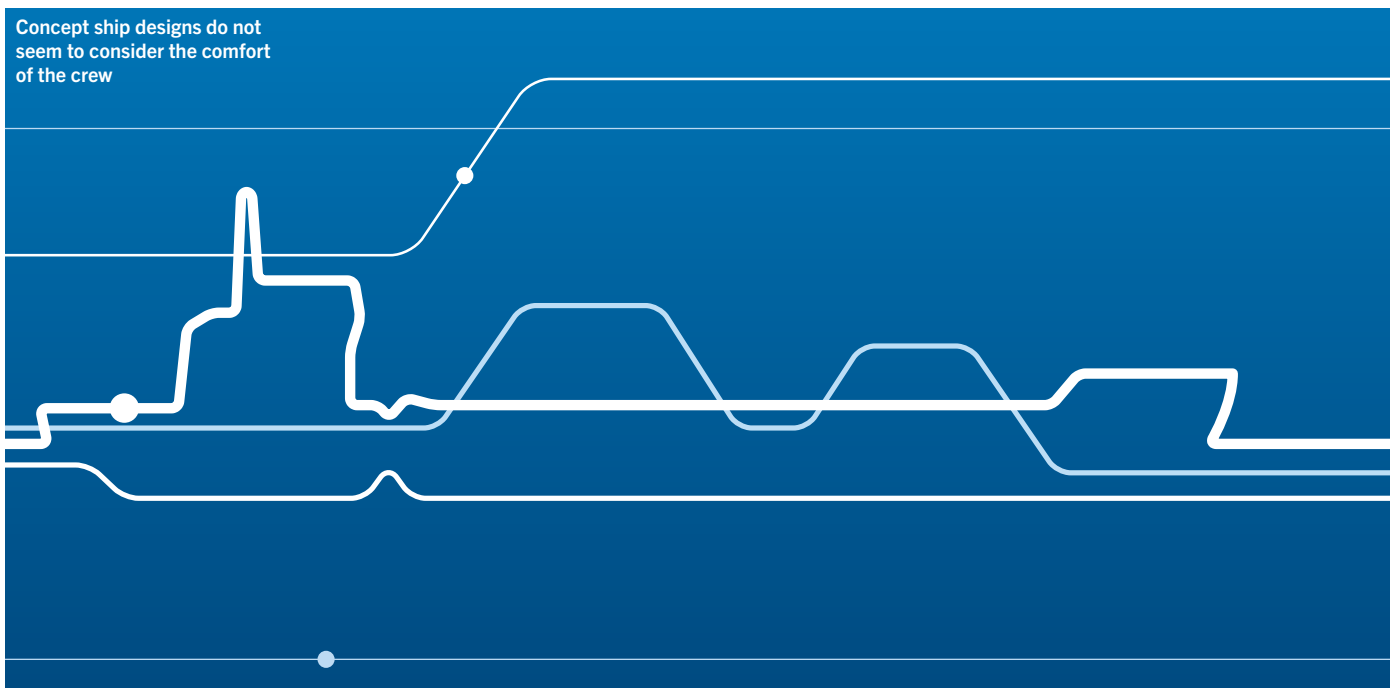
It could be that the designers leave no stone unturned or skimp in any way they can on costs of furnishing the accommodation for the small crews who will take these ships to sea. With the ship alongside in a snug harbour it might seem that the crew cabins and public spaces are of truly admirable quality with every comfort and convenience lavished upon them. Hopefully it will be far from the ‘institutionalised’ accommodation recent surveys have complained about.

But you are compelled to enquire

whether any of the design team have ever been to sea in a ship experiencing heavy head or steep following seas, when the extremities of the vessel experience violent accelerations, slamming and vibrations. While it may be discouraged by speed or course alterations, green seas boarding over the bow can be both alarming and hazardous. Given any choice, you probably wouldn’t want to be living in such circumstances, which is why, in more enlightened times, crew accommodation was ideally situated around the mid-length of the ship, where movement is less pronounced.

It may be something of a giveaway to my age, but I sailed in several pre-war built vessels where, just like their sailing ship predecessors, the sailors lived in the forecabin, admittedly in two-man cabins, but which were utterly miserable habitations in heavy weather, cold or heat. And with more modern ships with pleasant accommodation available, it became very difficult to find crews for these elderly vessels, in the autumn of their days. Are there any lessons there, as ship owners worry about crewing shortages, which are bound to get worse in the near term?

Maybe naval architects could adjust their priorities just a little and consider the lives their fellow human beings will live aboard the ships they are designing. It could be that everyone benefits! ☺



The long road back to 'normal'

Food shortages, extended rotations and contract challenges leave seafarers feeling trapped

The Q2 2023 Seafarers Happiness Index report revealed a concerning decline in satisfaction levels among seafarers across all the aspects we explore as part of the SHI. The drop seemingly reflects frustration with perceived delays in returning to pre-pandemic standards across a range of key issues.

Despite a return to normal in most aspects of life, crew changes remain delayed, leading to extended periods spent on board – which in turn leads to frustration and has a negative impact on seafarers' physical and mental health. We have also heard that contract conditions and wages have suffered, resulting in unfavourable working conditions and financial strains.

Despite progress in overcoming the worst effects of the pandemic, seafarers feel that further improvements have reached their limits. Operational realities and employment standards have fallen to a lower level than before, leaving seafarers feeling trapped in a cycle of diminishing conditions. This downward shift in standards must be addressed to uplift seafarers' experiences.

Seafarers face a range of other challenges too, beyond the desire for relief and fair remuneration. Contracts are still being altered or disregarded, and issues surrounding wages have become increasingly problematic. From non-payment of wages to gradual salary cuts, rising taxes, increased living costs, and the harsh realities of inflation, seafarers are confronting numerous difficulties in their profession.

There is a strong impression that while employers were quick to respond to the pressures of the Covid-19 crisis, the return to pre-pandemic standards has been far slower. Extended crew changes have become the new norm for many seafarers, and there is a general lack of clarity on relief crew joining vessels. All told, uncertainty persists, and seafarers reluctantly accept that they are likely to remain at sea for longer durations than anticipated, even though travel restrictions have been lifted. It seems excuses are far easier to come by than actions.

Another serious issue that also emerged in that quarter saw seafarers raising concerns about food and drinking water. The issue of limited,



Seafarers want to see improvements in a range of areas

charged or restricted access to drinking water has emerged as a significant concern among seafarers, raising worries about hydration and overall health.

Supplies 'shortage'

Additionally, vessels deliberately running low on supplies awaiting cheaper port calls has led to challenges in providing adequate provisions, impacting seafarers' overall satisfaction. These conditions are troubling, contradict the image of a modern and professional industry, and are something that the wider industry needs to rail against. Such concerns are more akin to coffin ships of the Victorian age, not the modern, professional industry we profess to be. The very concept that seafarers could be going hungry and thirsty going about their work should be anathema to all of us.

Seafarers also reported other concerns – some which are worryingly consistent across SHI reports. These include issues such as high workload, lack of private time, and inadequate gym facilities, indicating the growing demands on their time and the struggle to achieve a work-life balance. Such issues harm their physical and mental well-being.

There was also frustration about excessive paperwork. Despite moves

to digitalise the industry, the role of administration and bureaucracy is increasingly difficult to manage with existing crewing levels. Simplifying administrative processes could contribute to a more efficient and fulfilling work environment.

The fact there is a sense of 'too few people to do too much work' persists, and seafarers face real challenges related to work and rest hour violations. Those at sea feel that the rules are not being applied and auditors are not seeing the real situation. The net results are overwork, fatigue and stress. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps no surprise to see the latest data show a marked drop in satisfaction. ☹

Steven Jones is the founder of the Seafarers' Happiness Index, in association with Idwal and the Standard Club. The Index is designed to monitor and benchmark seafarer satisfaction levels by asking 10 key questions and serves as an important barometer of seafarer satisfaction with life at sea. Questions focus on a range of issues, from mental health and wellbeing, to working life and family contact. If you would like more information, to see the data or read more in-depth reports, visit www.seafarershappinessindex.org/ for access to the latest results and to have your say.

theSea Leisure Page

There are many health benefits to spending down-time solving puzzles. Lower stress levels, better memory, uplifted 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	6		4					1
5		2		3				
	9	4	8					
2	5		3	8				
	3		4		1		8	
				5	9		6	3
					7	5	2	
			6			3		4
9			5			8		7

MEDIUM LEVEL

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

Credit: www.sudokuoftheday.com

EASY LEVEL

solution (Issue 2 2023)

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

TRICKY LEVEL

solution (Issue 2 2023)

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

Jumble

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to thesea@missiontoseafarers.org by September 28, 2023. 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..."

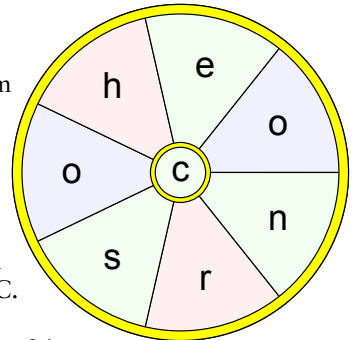
- 1) Dahingon 2) Glanshi 3) Ginswot 4) Agraeric

Issue 2, 2023 solutions:

- 1) Longitude 2) Tropics 3) Latitude 4) Equator

Word wheel

This word wheel is made from an eight-letter word. Try and find that word, then make as many words of three letters or more as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter C.



Answer for Issue 2, 2023 issue: 34 possible words, nine-letter word was Commodity

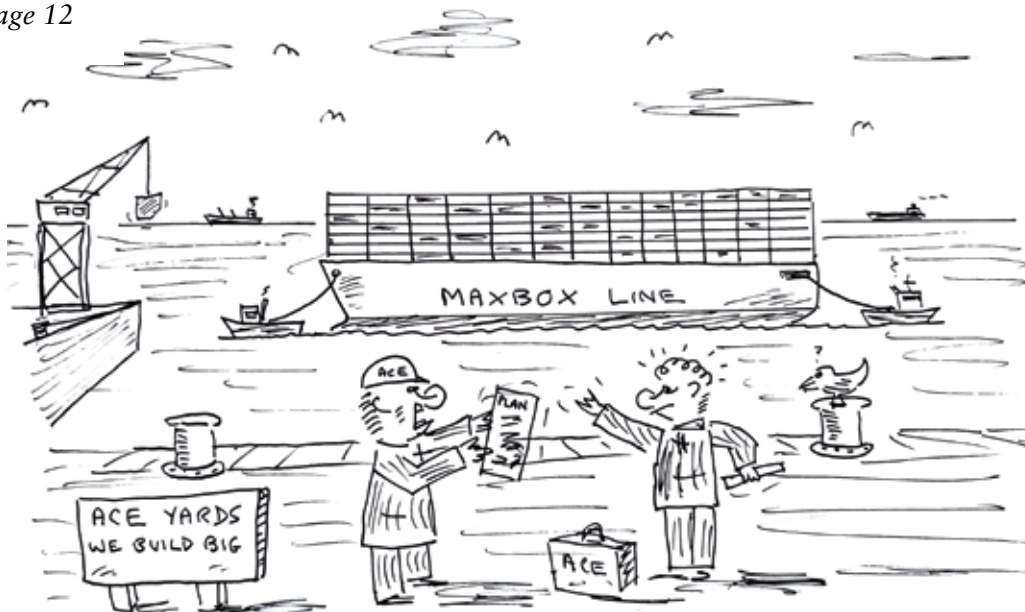
Flag code

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

Answer for Issue 2, 2023: Supply Chain



See Michael Grey's feature on page 12



"10% extra capacity – but there's no room for the crew!"

Help for seafarers around the world

Are you one of the 1.89 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 35,000 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

WeCare

Our WeCare e-learning programme gives seafarers access to mental health advice and wellbeing resources on board and on shore.

For more information contact your local Seafarer Centre, www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports.

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,

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By The Revd Canon Andrew Wright

Bless the ships in which we sail

Seafarers have a special respect for the elements and the protection their ships offer

Taking part in ship blessing ceremonies, especially when they are named, is always a privilege. An old Captain once said to me that “seamanship can only get you so far, after that there is only God”.

Seafarers are perhaps among the most religious, or at least the most spiritually sensitive, groups in the world. No surprise. After all, they live closer to the elements than most of us.


The ever-changing winds, weathers and seas cannot easily be shut out by doors, windows and walls. They impact on every moment of the waking and sleeping life of a crew. That can bring

a very special sense of God and of utter dependence. It may be that the ever more visible impacts of climate change will bring that sense to others.

As I write, we are seeing it in the searing and record-breaking temperatures in Europe and far beyond and in the changing patterns and intensity of rain, storm and flood across so many parts of the world (with a special impact on a number of the main nations from which seafarers are drawn). How I hope that will lead to global action on the necessary scale.

At The Mission to Seafarers, we are also considering what further actions

we should take. This is the context of ship blessings which can mean so much to seafarers, not least after a tragedy on board. It is one thing Mission chaplains are always happy to do.

Such blessings are a recognition of our need of God, of his love, of his forgiveness, of his guidance, of his blessing. They are a necessary and healthy recognition of our own fallibility and weakness. After all, as the old Celtic prayer says: “O God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small.”  *The Revd Canon Andrew Wright is secretary general of The Mission to Seafarers.*

A prayer for seafarers

O Lord God Almighty, let your blessing be upon this ship and upon all those who will serve and sail in her.

May the strength of God pilot them.

May the power of God preserve them.

May the hand of God protect them. May the way of God direct them.

May good success, your protection and the guardianship of the Holy Angels always be with them.

In times of danger be their help and defence and bring them safely into port.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen