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Seafarers need to be  
protected from rogue  
crewing agents

## Shipping's dark crewing underbelly

*Would-be and existing seafarers need to be educated on the risks of crewing scams* **By Felicity Landon**

**W**e could call them rogue crewing agents – but why not say it how it is? We're talking about international scammers, sophisticated criminal gangs, hardened individuals and groups set on exploiting vulnerable and often desperate people. We're talking about extortion, blackmail and violence. We are talking about seafarers being persuaded to hand over thousands of dollars only to end up enduring terrible conditions on a substandard vessel – or, even, never getting on a vessel at all.

Last year, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) launched a campaign to combat fraudulent crewing agents. It reported these were increasing, particularly because so many people use social media to search for jobs, and scammers are only too happy to advertise fake jobs via Facebook or LinkedIn.

"Seafarers respond because these

scammers prey on the desperation of some people for work. They then start charging them using fake visa requests and things like that," warned ITF inspectorate co-ordinator Steve Trowsdale.

A 2024 report from The Mission to Seafarers and Liverpool John Moores University found that from a survey of over 200 seafarers, almost 65% stated that they were aware of illegal demands for recruitment or placement fees, either through personal experience or the experience of a colleague. Over half of respondents said that the demand for illegal fees and charges were from the crewing agent appointed by the shipping company. A further 31% said it was from an individual with links to the crewing agent and 11% said the demand came from an employee of the shipping company.

Steven Jones, maritime consultant, says the number of rogue agents is likely higher than we know. "In the chain of relationships between the shipowner and the seafarer, there seem to be more and more little links appearing. These links are where it's possible for someone to get into the chain and get closer to the seafarers, especially in certain countries. Someone spots an opportunity to get into that relationship and then has control over the seafarers."

The single largest issue here is when seafarers are persuaded to pay large 'recruitment fees', says Jones. "Often they are not even seafarers at that point, just an ambitious young person who wants to achieve something and is told 'it will cost you this many dollars'. Entire families, villages or communities may rally round to raise, say, \$10,000 to get this person the opportunity to become a seafarer – then

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Seafarers sometimes only find out they have been scammed on joining the ship

Credit: Oleksy Konstantinidi

they end up on some terrible ship, nothing like they were promised, no real job, and ultimately the ship gets abandoned, or they don't ever get paid. Once the operator disappears, the poor seafarer is trapped, desperate, can't go home and wondering how on earth they are going to repay their families."

### Violence and intimidation

Jones equates all of this to loan sharks; there are well reported cases of violence and intimidation against seafarers and even their families who try to fight back or highlight the issues. And there are concerns about a lack of awareness and knowledge of how rogue operators work, he says. "In communities, this is where probably most of the work needs to be done – education. If someone rocks up and says they are going to give you an opportunity to be on the best ships in the world, they are not."

It doesn't have to be in person, of course: "I see it constantly on Facebook: 'Come and join a ship, send an email to this Gmail account'. But if you are not attuned to the way it all works and don't know the legitimate pieces of the jigsaw, plus they are being friendly and nice, and it seems like the answer, of course it is tempting.

"The seafarers can end up on older ships in problem trading areas with a lack of protection, weaker enforcement and wondering where to turn. Even if you can get in contact with your family – and the likelihood of good connectivity on these types of ships is slim – what are you going to say to your family and friends who raised money to help you? 'You got it wrong, you are not being paid, you are not getting the money back'? The mental health impact of these kinds of pressures must push people to absolute breaking point."

Capt Henrik Jensen, CEO of Danica, says rogue agents are mainly active in Ukraine, Russia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

"In certain countries, rogue crewing agents are a real problem," he says. "They ask for a commission from the seafarers or give them false information about what vessel they are joining. They may say it's a super new vessel and eventually the seafarer joins a completely different vessel – which they only find out when they have the ship in front of them at the pier."

### Checks and clarifications

If a back-street crewing agency with two employees in the office is offering a job

with a leading tanker owner without any screening or interviews, then the seafarer should of course be suspicious, says Jensen. "For the simple fraudulent agencies where the seafarer is paying a commission to get a job on a nice vessel and then finds instead that they are joining a substandard vessel, seafarers should check on the internet the ownership and position of the vessel before they sign the employment contract and, if in doubt, ask for clarification."

However, he also warns of fraud where there is a mutual agreement between the crewing agent and the seafarer. The agent, knowing the shipping company's requirements, designs the seafarer's CV to match perfectly and guides the seafarer on what questions they will be asked at interview. "Some even offer a substitute to sit online tests. For this 'service', the seafarer pays a fee or commission. On social media there are even 'consultants' who advertise that they can create a CV that matches any rank and vessel type. These consultants construct a CV and extract details of the vessels from internet databases, such as equipment, crew nationalities, trade area, port state controls and casualties. They give the seafarer a 'handbook' with this information which he/she can study and then give the right answers if questioned at the interview with the owner."

This is an extreme example, says Jensen, but the mutual agreement element between agency and seafarer is common. "In general, there are enough offers for competent seafarers and it is possible to find a job matching each seafarer's capabilities. However, seafarers striving for higher wages may be willing to pay the rogue agency for their 'assistance'."

He warns seafarers: "The biggest risks are the risks to yourselves, your colleagues and the safety of the ship. Working alongside a crew member who has achieved the role through false documentation and has no proper experience in that position or with the vessel's equipment is a big risk to safety. Seafarers need to be able to trust their colleagues and work together professionally in a high-pressure environment. And shipowners need properly qualified crew on board. So faking documentation, experience and abilities is very dangerous."

### Safety risks

Seafarers and shipping companies must be aware of the growing problem of rogue crewing agents to ensure that the risks are kept to a minimum, says Capt Saurabh

Mahesh, Columbia's Group director crewing (operations).

"As with all scams, they are becoming more complex and harder to spot at a glance, but it is feasible to identify them by remaining vigilant against these con artists. The scale of the problem really depends on locations and are mainly observed in countries which are not MLC-ratified or are without adequate control by maritime administration," he says.

This issue has grown considerably since the pandemic, which accelerated the shift to digital recruitment, says Mahesh. "With more processes now taking place online, it has become easier for rogue agencies to exploit jobseekers, often using sophisticated tools like AI and editing software to create convincing but fraudulent job offers. These scams are especially common in regions with weaker regulatory oversight. Companies like Columbia are actively working with maritime authorities, training institutions and local partners to raise awareness, educate seafarers and uphold ethical crewing standards across the globe."

A seafarer interacting with a potential rogue agent could be at risk of paying money upfront for a job that doesn't exist, or the job application is not processed in the right way and never received by the employer, says Mazen Barhoun, Columbia's crew manager, manning and recruitment.

"In some cases, agents will contact crew members requesting a significant amount of money in exchange for finding them a job and even with the promise of falsifying documents or data to match a job opening. Columbia has a zero-fee recruitment policy and strictly follows ethical hiring practices across its global network. We also encourage candidates to verify job offers and communicate directly with our crewing offices when in doubt."

### Warning signs

It is important that seafarers remain vigilant against these scams and educate themselves on what to look out for, says Barhoun. "Employers and management companies need to be aware and ensure awareness is promoted but often they have very little to do with the scammers, so a lot of the responsibility lies with the seafarers to recognise when they are being targeted."

Signs seafarers should look out for include: a lack of published policies on recruitment and agency processes; a lack of statements and commitment regarding anti-bribery and 'no fees/

*"Seafarers respond because these scammers prey on the desperation of some people for work. They then start charging them using fake visa requests and things like that"*

charges' applicable to jobseekers in any format or for any reason; missing details on agency status and certification for local and international regulations compliance; undefined requirements or criteria set for job matching; and a lack of transparency on employment details, including benefits.

Seafarers should do research into the agency, says Barhoun, and ask for certification. They should not agree to pay without confirmation in writing if related to crew expenses, such as STCW or passports, and should also cross-check the reason for this with crewmates or with the employer company. "When requested to pay certain amounts, request a written explanation from the principal/employer."

Seafarers should also verify an employment offer to ensure it is legitimate – they can search the vessel details online and ensure it matches with the ship manager declared. Finally: "Ask for your rights and obligations in line with the job terms. For example, what costs is the employer liable for and what falls on the seafarer?"

InterManager's secretary general, Capt Kuba Szymanski, is more optimistic than some. He believes the number of rogue crewing agents is very small, "but nevertheless extremely painful for seafarers who fell for it".

"I am aware of this happening in India and Ukraine. We see India being worse, especially with young cadets who do not know the industry and accept 'assistance' from agencies which pretend to be genuine."

He lists the risks as: "Not being insured, being sent to a ship where the owner is likely to abandon the ship when there is any problem, ending up unpaid, working on a substandard ship with poor food and appalling H&S conditions, and being sent to high-risk areas."

Seafarers must look out for the telltale signs, says Szymanski: lack of contract, being asked to pay any money towards visa, travel or PPE, unusually high salary (too good to be true), and unusually good contract conditions such as two weeks on/two weeks off, and being paid when at home.

Nevertheless, he does not think the problem is growing. "MLC is really making its mark on this issue," he says.


Capt Jensen at Danica disagrees. "There are regulatory defences in place to protect the seafarers, like the Maritime Labour Convention. The question is whether it is properly enforced by the authorities. The Convention has been in force for ten years now, and apparently it has not stopped the problem."

To be fair, seafarers can at least refer to the MLC to know their rights, as pointed out by Capt Saurabh Mahesh at Columbia. "Nowadays, even in the most isolated places or non-maritime communities they can find details online using official websites, such as the IMO or ITF. Seafarers can also arm themselves with knowledge and check websites for maritime conferences, articles and newsletters, attend online seminars, and be educated on their rights and current MLC guidelines," he says.

### Slave labour

Jones emphasises that the issues are no different to slave labour elsewhere and should be treated as such. He would like to see more proactive work by non-maritime NGOs and agencies in the hotspots to nip things in the bud.

"The activities of rogue agents are part of a much bigger systematic abuse of human rights. Criminal gangs spot this kind of opportunity – domestic work, farming, shipping – pay me \$10,000 and I will build the life you want. It just so happens that at the point when someone steps on the gangway, it becomes a shipping industry issue."

The point at which someone has packed a bag is far too late to act, he warns. "We need outreach in the areas where we know seafarers are being pulled in. We need a UN special rapporteur for maritime/shipping. Then, from the highest echelons of the UN, these issues can be identified, discussed and understood, and the rest of the UN system can be triggered into a response. The wider network of NGOs and charities globally could be brought into that as a response and ultimately to drive a solution." 

# Pivotal role of training in decarbonisation

Reaching net zero needs support of, and for, seafarers **By Anastasia Kouvertari**

**A**s the maritime industry moves towards decarbonisation, the transition to zero and near-zero greenhouse gas emission fuels represents far more than merely a technological shift. In essence, it calls for an overhaul in the training of the maritime workforce.

The scale of this challenge cannot be overstated. Current projections estimate that approximately 800,000 seafarers will require upskilling and reskilling within the next decade to safely handle vessels powered by alternative fuels. While fuels like ammonia and hydrogen have been transported as cargo for years, their use as marine fuels creates new and significant operational challenges that require tailored safety measures, procedural modifications and competency-based training.

Ammonia's extreme toxicity requires advanced emergency response protocols and specialised protective equipment. Methanol's flammability and corrosive nature demands improved fire detection systems and enhanced safety procedures. Hydrogen's near-invisible flames require innovative detection technologies and comprehensive fire safety training.

In response to this challenge, the Lloyd's Register Maritime Decarbonisation Hub (the Decarb Hub), a partnership between the Lloyd's Register Foundation and Lloyd's Register Group, has established a dedicated Human Safety and Risk team. With expertise in engineering risk, human factors and process safety, the team ensures that safety remains the cornerstone of the energy transition. Their approach is rooted in evidence-based risk management and human-centric safety design, which will effectively be complemented by rigid training frameworks that will equip seafarers with the necessary skillset to join the modern ships of the future propelled by the green molecules.

## Bridging the skills gap

Current training standards simply cannot keep pace with technological advancements. The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) is undergoing a comprehensive review, with over 500 regulatory gaps identified. However, substantive amendments won't be finalised until 2031-2032, a timeline that is inadequate for the rapid transition already underway.



This skills gap presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Emerging maritime economies have the potential to become regional hubs and leaders in these new green skills, diversifying the seafaring workforce and generating significant economic benefits through job creation.

That is why the Decarb Hub's partnership with the IMO Maritime Just Transition Task Force (MJTTF) and its developing training framework is so important. We have a real platform to ensure decarbonisation is delivered in a way that is safe, fair and equitable while empowering local voices throughout the maritime value chain. But achieving this requires immediate and co-ordinated action across the industry.

A modular approach to training offers the most promising solution, combining standardised baseline courses with specialised modules for different fuel types and vessel operations. Simulation-based training will play a crucial role, allowing seafarers to navigate hazardous scenarios within controlled environments. Beyond technical competencies, training must foster a robust safety culture that prioritises continuous assessment and embeds best practices into daily operations.

The industry must also address the quantitative challenge of training at scale. Revisions to international standards, comprehensive simulation programmes, and thorough onboard familiarisation will all be essential components of this effort. But equally important is the qualitative dimension – ensuring training frameworks integrate process safety management, risk assessment protocols and emergency response procedures tailored to alternative fuels.

Technological advancements will further transform the seafarer's role.

Hydrogen fuel cells, wind-assisted propulsion, and real-time digital monitoring systems will require deeper understanding of energy efficiency and risk management. As shipping embraces automation and big data analytics, seafarers must develop new digital competencies alongside their traditional maritime skills.

Perhaps most crucially, the industry must listen actively to seafarers themselves. Their perspectives on the energy transition and the safety of handling alternative fuels will significantly influence adoption rates, with direct implications for profitability and revenue. Establishing effective forums for seafarers to share their expertise without fear of retribution, through anonymous reporting platforms such as HELMEPA's VIRP platform and through the work done by CHIRP Maritime, will be vital to ensuring training programmes are fit for purpose.

Decarbonisation demands not just technological innovation but a fundamental reimagining of how we prepare our workforce as we steer shipping towards net zero. The maritime industry must invest in green skills and workforce readiness, hold itself accountable for performance against sustainability goals, and respond to new regulations in a way that inspires confidence among the seafaring workforce and the public at large.

By investing in comprehensive, modular training that addresses both technical and behavioural competencies, we can ensure the transition to alternative fuels occurs safely, and effectively. **S**

*Anastasia Kouvertari is the senior lead for human competency at Lloyd's Register Maritime Decarbonisation Hub.*

# Digital tools for seafarers, developed with seafarers

*Involving the people actually operating ships is imperative for digitalisation to be impactful* **By Esa Henttinen**

**A**s the shipping industry moves toward cleaner fuels and new propulsion technologies, the biggest changes are not just happening in boardrooms, they're happening onboard. Seafarers are at the heart of shipping's energy transition but, as a result, face a changing workload and frequent new challenges.

A recent survey by the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) confirmed that the unprecedented changes brought about by the energy transition are already impacting seafarer fatigue and stress.

The survey reported that over half of the 400 respondents from 29 nations had experienced an increase in workload, one third stated they feared potential criminalisation for failing to complete increasingly complex reporting requirements, and 44% of respondents reported an increase in stress, with a similar percentage also reporting higher levels of fatigue.

These survey results come alongside a concerning increase in casualties for crew working in enclosed spaces. According to an InterManager report, although the frequency of accidents remained fairly constant, 55% of accidents in the past 28 years have happened during planned work, with many incidents concentrated in high-risk areas like oil tanks and holds. This work being pre-planned should reduce the risk of accidents, but this is not the case.

This concerning trend is a clear indication that the current 'permit to work' processes are not fit for purpose. Traditionally, these hazardous tasks have been planned and managed through a web of manual checklists and paperwork prone to delays, oversight and misunderstandings.

## Digitalisation must be done right

By digitalising the permit-to-work process, we can dramatically reduce the chances of human error, potentially preventing accidents before they occur. These digital permits help ensure every step of the process is completed correctly and provide real-time visibility of high-risk tasks for both crews onboard and shoreside teams.

However, too often, new digital tools are introduced without proper consultation with the people expected to use them. That's why, when we developed our Permit to Work system, seafarers were involved from the very start. Crews from companies like Carnival Cruise Lines and Virgin Voyages contributed to the process, helping identify where the current systems weren't working and how digital tools could help.

The result is digital tools designed around how work is really done on ships. Instead of chasing signatures or relying on disconnected forms, crews can follow

a clear, digital process that's faster, safer, and easier to track. By involving seafarers directly in development, the system fits into daily operations rather than adding to the administrative overload.

Another major challenge for crews is the increasing volume of environmental data reporting required. Regulations like FuelEU Maritime, EU MRV, and IMO DCS demand detailed, verified data – often requiring seafarers to spend more time behind a computer than on the deck.

Here too, when developed and implemented properly, digital tools can help. NAPA's electronic logbook, for example, was developed with input from seafarers and class societies. It allows data to be uploaded automatically to verification portals like DNV, cutting down on manual entries and reducing errors. Shipping company Anthony Veder reported a 14% reduction in administration time and saved around 2,000 hours per vessel each year after adopting the system.

The bottom line is, as shipping adapts to new environmental standards, digitalisation will be key. However, for digital tools to be impactful, they must be shaped by the people using them. That means listening to seafarers, involving crew in decisions, and building systems that reflect the realities of life at sea. [🔗](#)  
*Esa Henttinen is executive vice president for safety solutions at NAPA.*



Credit: NAPA

Seafarers need to be directly involved in the development of digital solutions

# Qualification questions for icebound seas

*Increasing shipping activity in polar waters calls for a rethink of traditional ice training*

By Vittorio Lippay

In the last decade, because of new opportunities in the extractive and tourism activities, the sea traffic in the Arctic corridors has increased by 7% each year. Demand for bridge personnel qualified for navigation in sea ice conditions has followed suit.

The IMO International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, enacted in 2017, covers design, construction and equipment, search and rescue, environmental protection and training matters for ships operating about the two poles. Under the Code, which was mandatory as of July 1, 2018, the master, the chief mate, and all officers of the watch (OOWs) of any vessel sailing in polar waters with more than 1/10 ice cover must hold a certificate of proficiency (CoP) in advanced training for service issued by national authorities or approved substitutes. Watchstanders of tankers and passenger ships operating in waters with less than 1/10 ice cover need a basic training certificate. The certificates must be re-validated every five years.

In the past, the training to acquire the preliminary skills and expertise for navigation in icebound seas was based exclusively on learning while aboard ships sailing in polar waters. The rising demand for qualified officers has accelerated the introduction of virtual reality (VR) simulators designed to

improve the quality of education while reducing the real training time and its expenses. In the UK, for instance, for CoP qualification the Nautical Institute requires 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) minimum experience in ice conditions as Master or as OOW of which up to half may be met by successful completion of an approved ice navigation course using a simulator.

Similarly, the Swedish Maritime Administration has approved the use of simulator training while working towards the advanced certificate. “Virtual reality is a particularly important and valid tool for the students to get a better understanding of manoeuvring around and in ice,” says Jan Persson, senior mariner advisor and Polar Code specialist of the 90North Ice Consulting company in Sweden.

## Traffic increase

Considering the steady growth in Arctic traffic – some of which is passenger cruises – the question has been raised whether the current IMO qualification rules should be revised, requiring more practice and virtual training. While global warming opens new sea corridors, intensive ice melting complicates navigation because of more drifting ice on some routes.

Persson explains: “You can exercise almost everything in VR, but you will never get the feeling for the sound, or on how the vessel is moving side

to side when running into an ice field, or when you need to go astern when you are stuck. Presently, VR will approximate about 75% of the experience.”

According to Persson, who has trained hundreds of watchstanders, the level of expertise currently required by the 2017 Polar Code is a good start, but then officers need to gain more experience day by day. “There’s a big difference if you navigate in polar waters in summer or in winter,” says Persson. “One does not become an expert pilot after having been to Svalbard or Greenland just one or two times. It will take many, many years in ice, both in summer and winter conditions.”

On the other side of the Atlantic, for this article I interviewed Capt Paul Ruzycki of Martech Polar, a company specialising in ice pilotage and polar navigation worldwide. Ruzycki’s first ‘taste’ of polar navigation was 30 years ago on the Bering Sea and north coast of Alaska.

Having found his first ‘ice edge’, Ruzycki was hooked on sailing through icebound waters, and to date has undertaken 23 expeditions to the polar seas including six to Antarctic seas.

Ruzycki said that he has observed sailing on various vessels with numerous international crews where many of the bridge team officers have acquired their CoP for operating in polar waters. “Much of the ‘ice sea time’ had been logged in summer months, where their ships have a low ice class and they have been sailing in polar waters (as defined by the Polar Code), but not necessarily ‘ice infested waters’, where they must manoeuvre the vessel to avoid dangerous ice types or where their standing orders say that there shall be NO ice contact.”

Ruzycki adds: “In such conditions there is a need to understand the different peculiarities of ice types and movements, such as first year ice, second year ice, multi-year ice and ice of land origin (glacial ice). Also important is understanding which type of ice is of a greater concern to their ice class ship and route or destination. This has the potential for someone to become overconfident or complacent while sailing in polar waters.

Bridge officers need more time in polar waters to understand the challenges of navigation



Credit: Pixabay


“Many of the bridge officers have obtained enough time on polar waters to receive their CoPs without, however, having to avoid much ice during the summer months.”

In Ruzycky's opinion a 'real ice navigator' is someone who has spent most of their seagoing career sailing on polar waters and continues to do so. “Someone who has had the time and experience of sailing with mentors who were keen and willing to share knowledge to bridge officers who showed an above average interest while sailing on icy seas and who showed that they were trying to learn the various ways to operate the ships safely through the ice, as well as to take the criticism of how they were performing on the job and how they could do it better.”

### Arctic cruise risks

Passenger cruise ships in the Arctic usually sail in waters with little or no ice cover at all. Over 100 cruise ships sail there regularly, of which some of the more recent ones feature a higher polar class. This marks the intention to venture deeper into the Arctic than before to offer clients more attractive and exciting tours at less exploited latitudes. There is a level of thrill to be derived from a cruise to the poles, but Lara Johannisdottir of the University of Iceland and her colleagues at the University of Aberdeen in their extensive 2021 research on Systemic risk of cruise incident from an Arctic and insurance perspective, remind us of the 2013 accident of Costa Concordia in Italy. A similar event in a remote, freezing and rough environment in the Arctic, with no Isola del Giglio ready to assist at hand, would lead to much more serious consequences for cruise passengers. Complacency in Mediterranean waters cost \$2 billion and 32 human lives.

The Canadian Coast Guard warns: “Beyond the requirements, having an experienced person guiding the ship when there is the potential for encountering sea ice is always recommended.”

On this issue Ruzycky adds: “I would like to see tighter controls on who may be an ice navigator. That is: not a bridge officer who has minimum ‘ice sea time’, with only a basic a CoP and who thinks they are doing well.”  Vittorio Lippay is a member of the Institute of Physics and a member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers.



*“Many of the bridge officers have obtained enough time on polar waters to receive their CoPs without, however, having to avoid much ice during the summer months.”*

# Reimagining safety management at sea

*How AI can help make sense of complexity and identify unseen risks for seafarers*

By Ali Demiral

As digitalisation starts to reshape every aspect of ship operations, few areas stand to benefit more from artificial intelligence (AI) than safety management.

For too long, seafarers have carried the weight of increasingly complex regulatory demands, layered documentation, and rising cognitive pressures. But as a powerful learning tool, AI can lessen the load and improve maritime safety.

Safety management systems (SMS) are evolving beyond static checklists and tick-box exercises. The latest regulations demand nuance, evidence, and continuous assessment. That complexity can be daunting, especially for crews who must interpret ambiguous standards while maintaining day-to-day operations under intense conditions. That's where AI steps in – not to replace human decision-making, but to support it with speed, clarity, and contextual intelligence.

The AI technology we have built into the WiseStella platform, for instance, uses large language models that dig deep into historical safety data, industry guidance, and real-world reports, to provide actionable insights tailored to a vessel's operational profile.

Take the SIRE 2.0 or TMASA self-assessment process required of charterers. When a second engineer, for example, encounters a compliance question that seems vague, ambiguous, or tangential crews can consult Wise-AI to better understand what is required. Rather than struggling to interpret the intent behind a regulation, they receive guidance rooted in prior inspections, anonymised

fleet-wide trends, and best practices. In seconds, they're equipped with suggested responses and potential risks to explore further.

This technology is transformative. It reduces the time needed to complete assessments, alleviates stress, and builds a more confident and competent crew. More importantly, it fosters a deeper understanding of why certain actions matter, reinforcing a culture of safety that goes beyond compliance.

And this value extends beyond the individual ship. With built-in benchmarking tools, AI technology allows fleet managers to compare vessels' performance across a range of indicators. They can identify which ships are consistently strong and which need targeted support, enabling data-driven decisions that were previously impossible at scale.

## Help for crews

Yet as the industry embraces digital solutions to improve safety, we must also acknowledge their potential to support seafarer wellbeing. Cognitive overload, fatigue, and mental health issues remain serious challenges for crews operating under sustained pressure. AI can help here, too. By streamlining repetitive tasks, reducing documentation burden, and offering clarity where uncertainty breeds stress. The goal is not only safer operations but healthier ones, where crews are empowered rather than overwhelmed.

We've already started to explore these intersections more intentionally. Insights from wellbeing assessments, for example, show that mental strain and

operational risks are often tightly linked. When AI supports decision-making and documentation, it can free up cognitive capacity for critical thinking and better communication onboard. Used well, it becomes a tool for resilience.

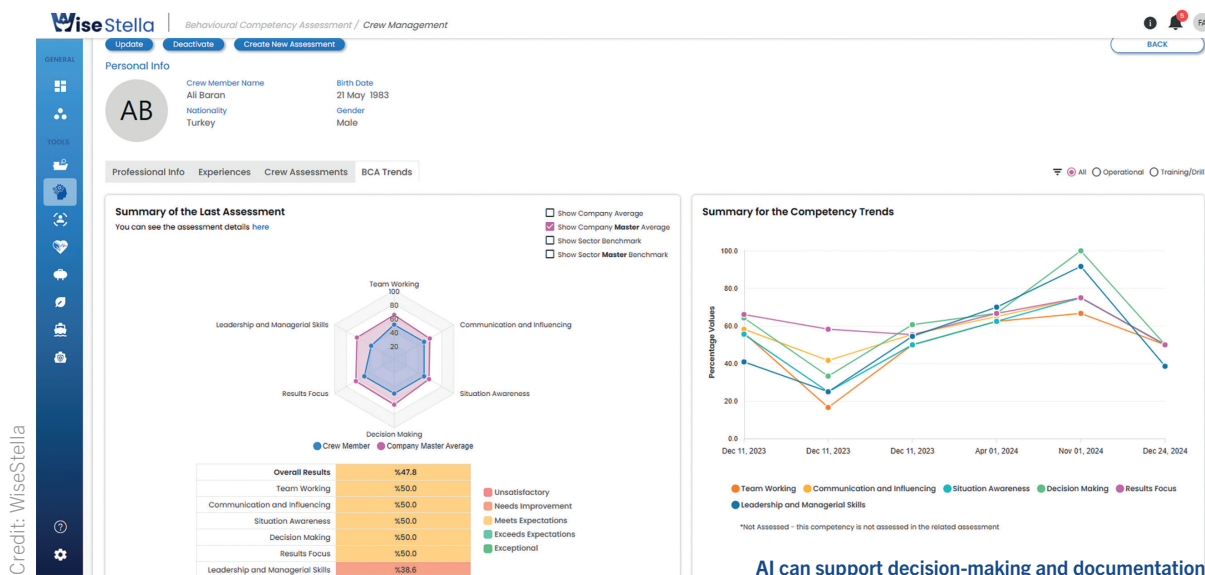
Our team of data scientists has worked closely with maritime professionals to ensure the technology understands not just language, but context. These are not off-the-shelf algorithms; they are bespoke models tailored to shipping, constantly refined based on feedback and evolving regulations.

Crucially, machine learning capabilities allow every new inspection, assessment, or feedback loop to improve predictive accuracy and relevance. The more data we process, the more precise and proactive the system becomes. And because we also incorporate guidance from regulators and professional bodies, insights reflect not only operational experience but also emerging expectations across the industry.

This is vitally important in an era where safety culture and compliance are increasingly under the spotlight. The maritime sector needs tools that make sense of complexity and AI can do that. It can identify unseen risks, simplify decision-making, and ultimately protect both people and assets.

It must be borne in mind, however, that AI is a co-pilot, not the captain. Every recommendation made by an AI-driven platform must be reviewed by qualified experts. Human-in-the-loop validation ensures that the insights our clients receive are not only intelligent but also trusted.

The future of maritime safety is not about more paperwork or reactive 'firefighting'. The future is more about foresight. It's about empowering seafarers with tools that make their jobs easier, safer, and more meaningful. *Ali Demiral is chief technology officer at WiseStella.*



AI can support decision-making and documentation

# The invisible key workers

*Will a new designation change how seafarers are treated for the better?*

By Michael Grey

If you are a serving seafarer, it may have given you a warm feeling in your heart if you learned recently that the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention has recognised you as a ‘key worker’. This ought to qualify seafarers for a range of rights for fair treatment, safe movement, proper medical assistance and shore leave, among several other entitlements due to them.

As always, the practical progress from such international agreements lies in the implementation, which tends to be patchy, to say the least, but the designation of ‘key worker’ surely ought to be regarded as something positive.

Nobody with an ounce of common sense could deny that seafarers deserve such an entitlement, considering what it is that they do, and what might be the global consequences if they all stopped doing it! It was a former Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (who had once served afloat) who came up with the assertion that seafarers “feed and fuel the world”, which nicely states the importance of this workforce that few people ever think about.

But you probably need to be a seafarer to realise that in so many places, the treatment of these key workers is far from optimal, as they struggle with visa regulations, have their opportunities for shore leave denied in many ports and are generally treated as second class citizens. Not so many years ago I saw a ship’s crew waiting patiently at an airport (I will not name the country) for all the ‘normal’ passengers – the tourists and ‘business’ people – to be passed through immigration. It was far from unusual treatment, one of them confided, and there was nothing to be done, he said. You just shrug and wait for the official procedures to work through.

## Shore leave rights

The matter of shore leave is another area where there is huge room for improvement with all sorts of imaginative reasons cooked up by officialdom as to why it should be denied. With small, hard-working crews, it is hard enough to get a few hours off, and it is very easy for the officials or port or terminal

managers to say no. Of course they don’t want people wandering around hazardous terminals, and just a few seafarers wanting access to the nearest shops is just too difficult to arrange. We saw this during the pandemic, but the bad habits have not entirely gone away in many places.

And why do these key workers have to jump through all sorts of hoops with visa regulations, just to get from A to B to join a ship, many of them involving both time and expense? They are seafarers ‘in transit’, for goodness sake, and their journey should be facilitated, not snarled up with arguments in Immigration. In a sensible world, where the role of seafarers was properly understood, it would be sufficient for a seafarer to present a Seafarer Identity Document to validate their journey with the authorities.

In the dim and distant past, a ‘Seaman’s Card’ was an accepted

alternative to a passport, validated by the Seaman’s Identity Documents Convention 1958, as adopted by the ILO in that year. It provided a photograph and details of the holder, and that was considered enough. Surely an electronic successor would do the trick today, organised with enormous efficiency by one of the major international card companies. The million and three quarters seafaring workforce would be a piece of cake to organisations accustomed to documenting hundreds of millions of individuals around the world.

In the end, it is all about numbers and visibility and the trouble is that seafarers are largely invisible and there are just not enough of them to produce the waves of necessary change within governments and officialdom. But key workers ought to have the expectation that they will be treated well. We must just wait and see how consequential any changes might be. [S](#)



Credit: Mission to Seafarers

There is ‘huge room for improvement’ in shore leave standards

# There for seafarers, whatever the request

*Recognising the importance of volunteers in providing practical and emotional support* By Matthew Moran-Ellis

Life at sea is a unique experience, rich in its own way. However, it also presents unique challenges that only a seafarer can truly understand. The harshness, isolation, and high demands are part and parcel of this life. Seafarers play a crucial role in our global trade and often find themselves making significant personal sacrifices through extended periods away from family and loved ones. These challenges can lead to feelings of isolation, homesickness, and even mental health issues.

All this makes time ashore invaluable, and this is where our dedicated volunteers step in. Our volunteers don't just offer a helping hand; they provide practical help, emotional support, and compassionate care – whatever the request. So, when you're feeling isolated at sea, remember that volunteers are there; from offering a sim card to help stay in touch, or a cup of tea and a listening ear, or opening up centres where you can relax and unwind, our volunteers are here to support you whatever the need.

Finding and keeping dedicated volunteers can be tough, even though they play an important role. With everyone's busy lives, demanding jobs, and personal commitments, fewer people have the time to volunteer. Plus, many potential volunteers might not know much about the maritime industry and the unique challenges seafarers face, making it even harder



Credit: Mission to Seafarers

Volunteers offer transport services at many ports

to recruit them. On top of that, volunteering to support seafarers isn't always straightforward. Ship schedules can be unpredictable, and volunteers often have to jump in at a moment's notice, usually outside of regular working hours.

The emotional demands of volunteering can also be pretty significant. Volunteers often meet seafarers who are dealing with homesickness, anxiety, or even serious personal crises. To provide meaningful support, volunteers need to be resilient, compassionate, and emotionally intelligent – a quality that not every volunteer naturally possesses.

## What makes a great volunteer?

So, what makes an outstanding volunteer? At the top of the list is genuine empathy and compassion. Great volunteers understand your unique experiences and challenges at sea, creating a safe space where you feel heard and supported. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are also crucial. Seafarers come from all sorts of backgrounds, and fantastic volunteers celebrate and respect these differences, fostering an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels valued.

Reliability and adaptability are just as important. Consider how often your schedule shifts unexpectedly while you're at sea – volunteers need to be just as flexible and dependable. When your shore leave is limited, having someone reliable to turn to can help ease your stress.

Finally, a curiosity and genuine interest in seafaring life help volunteers connect with you on a deeper level. Those who take the time to learn about maritime work, traditions, and challenges tend to build stronger, more meaningful relationships with the seafarers they support.

If you've been to a seafarers' centre or welcomed volunteers aboard your ship, you know their roles can vary quite a bit. Here are just a few ways they lend a hand:

- **Ship visits:** Volunteers frequently visit vessels in port, giving you someone to talk to, especially when you're feeling isolated. They might provide phone



Volunteers play a crucial role in the Mission's services

cards, Wi-Fi devices, or just a friendly face to share your experiences with.

- **Seafarers' Centres:** Volunteers help run welcoming centres where you can relax, connect with home, enjoy free Wi-Fi, grab a hot drink, and recharge. These spaces offer a comforting escape from the pressures of life on board, showing the volunteers' commitment to your well-being.

- **Transport and practical assistance:** Many volunteers offer free transportation to local stores, medical facilities, or places of worship. They can help you navigate unfamiliar ports, making the most of your limited shore leave.

- **Emergency support:** In times of crisis – be it medical, legal, or emotional – volunteers work closely with chaplains and welfare professionals to ensure you get the immediate support you need.

- **Spiritual and emotional care:** Many volunteers provide spiritual guidance, prayer opportunities, or simply a listening ear when you need comfort. They understand your working environment and offer non-judgmental support tailored to your needs.

## Dedicating time

Understanding why volunteers choose to dedicate their time to helping seafar-

ers can deepen your appreciation for their role. Many have a deep respect and gratitude for your sacrifices at sea. They recognise your hard work and the tough conditions you face, and volunteering is their way of showing their appreciation.


Some volunteers feel a strong sense of calling or duty. Those who volunteer with organisations like The Mission to Seafarers often share values of compassion, kindness, and service to others, which are sometimes rooted in faith or humanitarian beliefs. Volunteering also brings personal fulfilment to them. Seeing the positive impact of their efforts on your well-being, morale, and mental health is incredibly satisfying. Volunteers often talk about the friendships they build with seafarers, highlighting how rewarding these connections can be.

The actions of one volunteer can create a ripple effect that benefits everyone. When you feel supported, heard, and valued, it positively impacts your mental and emotional well-being. This, in turn, helps you cope better with life at sea and fosters stronger relationships among your crew mates, creating a healthier onboard environment. By educating others about the experiences you go through at sea, volunteers help foster greater empathy

and appreciation for your hard work, which can lead to more volunteers.

## Shore-based allies

It's easy to overlook the importance of volunteers until you find yourself in need of their help. The volunteers you meet when your ship docks are dedicated to ensuring you never feel forgotten or alone, no matter how far from home you are. Their commitment to being there for you – whatever you might need – reflects genuine compassion and care. They understand the sacrifices you make, the pressures you face, and how crucial it is to have someone to turn to.

As a seafarer, remember that volunteers are here for you. They freely give their time, compassion, and support, ready to help you with whatever you need. Volunteers are a vital part of your global maritime family, working hard ashore to ensure you feel connected, supported, and valued every time you come into port. Next time your ship docks and you meet a volunteer, remember that they've chosen to be there for you because they genuinely care about your well-being and recognise the immense value of your work. 

*Matthew Moran-Ellis is the church and volunteer engagement manager at the Mission to Seafarers.*

The actions of one volunteer can 'create a ripple effect' that benefits everyone



Credit: Mission to Seafarers

# A safe, attractive and sustainable industry

Pioneering change to set ambitious standards for living and working at sea By Carly Fields

**A**s the Global Maritime Forum's director of human sustainability, Susanne Justesen cares deeply about seafarers. Through various initiatives she has committed to improving safety and human well-being both at sea and on shore and is excited for the launch of the GMF's project on improving standards for living and working conditions at sea. Susanne spoke with *The Sea* about her passion and vision for better conditions for seafarers.

***The Sea:*** As the director of human sustainability at the Global Maritime Forum, you are dedicated to helping seafarers. Please can you tell the seafarers reading this why you chose this career path?

**Susanne Justesen:** "When I entered the maritime industry almost four years ago, I was struck by the incredible diversity and resilience of seafarers – people from all over the world who are essential to global trade. Throughout my career, I have seen how vital it is to recognise and support those who often work behind the scenes. I chose this career path because I believe we must make the industry safe, attractive and sustainable for ALL seafarers, both women and men, and both existing and future generations. No matter who they are or where they come from. I am deeply committed to advancing that mission."

**TS:** What have you most and least enjoyed about your maritime career to-date?

**SJ:** There are many things that I have enjoyed immensely – first and foremost, working closely with so many inspiring men and women, both



at sea and onshore, who are deeply passionate about creating a better, more sustainable future for the maritime industry, its people, and the planet.

One of the things I have enjoyed the least is the fact that transformational change, especially on a global scale, inevitably takes time. Coming from a background where I value fast-paced innovation, I sometimes find it challenging to wait for change to materialise. Fortunately, we work with some really ambitious companies and industry leaders from across our global maritime community, and they tend to work fairly fast as well. However, one thing is working with first movers, another is getting everyone else on board; which is what taught me the importance of persistence and patience, especially when it comes to building strong, lasting coalitions that can achieve and drive real impact. Sometimes we need to go slow to go fast.

**TS:** What changes have you experienced for seafarers over your career, positive and negative?

**SJ:** When I first joined the maritime industry, the world was still grappling with the severe impacts of Covid-19. Seafarers were among the hardest hit – facing enormous challenges in joining and leaving ships, often stranded far from home for months. Through initiatives like the All Aboard Alliance, the Neptune Declaration, and other collaborative efforts, we have been able to bring more strategic attention to seafarers' well-being, leading to greater recognition of their essential role and the urgent need to improve their working and living conditions. Since Covid-19, I have seen a positive shift: there is now much stronger momentum around human sustainability, with a greater focus on ensuring safer, fairer, and more supportive environments for seafarers. However, I am concerned about the growing pressures from the current geopolitical climate, which can threaten to undermine these gains. It reminds us that continued commitment and collective action are needed to safeguard the progress made and to keep human sustainability at the forefront of the maritime agenda.

**TS:** You've spoken about the need for a shift in mindset from viewing seafarers as 'costs to be minimised' to long-term investments. Can you explain the problem and what needs to be done to resolve that?

**SJ:** Traditionally, seafarers have often been viewed as operational costs to be minimised, which has led to underinvestment in their well-being, career development, and working conditions. This mindset overlooks the fact that seafarers are essential to the industry's long-term resilience and success. To change this, we must see seafarers as strategic stakeholders—and find ways to engage more closely in giving voice to seafarers, and make sure the seafaring voice is represented when important decisions are being made. Human sustainability at sea needs to be embedded into decision-making, not treated as secondary to financial performance. Investing in people is not just the right thing to do – it is critical to maintaining the resilience of global seaborne trade.

Seafarers must not be viewed as operational costs to be minimised



Credit: Willem stiven Cardona Iopera

**TS:** You were integral to the launch of the first-of-a-kind Sustainable Crewing Guidelines in March. What does this project mean to you and how will it impact seafarers?

**SJ:** The Sustainable Crewing Guidelines project has been very personal and meaningful to me. I am incredibly proud of the journey we shared with industry leaders and seafarers from over 20 companies, and later, through pilot testing onboard 12 vessels. Together, we co-designed solutions to make life at sea more inclusive and attractive for both men and women. When we launched the nine guidelines during Singapore Maritime Week, it was the result of a truly collaborative effort involving over 800 seafarers, both within and outside the pilot. The guidelines, along with practical indicators, now provide companies and seafarers with a concrete way to assess conditions onboard and define what 'good' looks like. We hope this will not only support better workplaces at sea but also guide charterers, customers, and industry leaders in setting new, but higher standards for what good, better and best looks like when it comes to living and working conditions at sea; which is the next project we are working on within the All Aboard Alliance.

**TS:** You recently expressed alarm at the 87% rise in abandoned vessels in 2024. In your view, what can GMF, seafarers and the industry do to address this?

**SJ:** The sharp rise in vessel abandonments is deeply concerning, especially given the devastating impact it has on seafarers who are often left without wages or support. I believe the industry must take collective accountability, starting with establishing global wage protection mechanisms to safeguard seafarers from unpaid wages. We are currently looking into whether and how a global foundation or fund could be created, supported by contributions from across the industry to secure pay to abandoned seafarers. It won't be easy, but ensuring financial security for seafarers during crises is critical, and we are committed to finding solutions.

**TS:** What is your goal for GMF's Human Sustainability programme in the medium term and what do you personally hope to achieve?

**SJ:** My medium-term goal for the Human Sustainability programme is to drive broad industry alignment around



*“To every seafarer reading this: your work, your resilience, and your spirit are seen and valued more than ever before”*

a clear set of human sustainability goals for life and work at sea. These goals – part of the industry's long-term ambitions towards 2030 – include reducing contract lengths, ensuring wage protection, strengthening health and well-being support, creating safer and more inclusive workplaces, and building stronger career pathways for seafarers. A key ambition is to co-design a set of global industry standards that define what good, better, and best look like when it comes to living and working at sea – making human sustainability easy to communicate, measure, and adopt across the maritime sector. Personally, I hope to help shift the mindset so that investing in people becomes a strategic foundation for the industry's future resilience and success.

**TS:** How important is human sustainability in this industry?

**SJ:** Human sustainability in maritime is not just an initiative – it is a movement. It is about recognising that the success of our industry depends on the well-being, safety, and aspirations of the people who keep it moving. We are at a pivotal moment, and while the challenges are real, so are the opportunities. I cannot wait to embark on the work to create a set of ambitious standards for living and working at sea, just as I am incredibly excited about the 2030 Industry Goals for Human Sustainability that the All

Aboard Alliance will present later this year. Together – seafarers, companies, organisations, and industry leaders – we can chart a new course where people are truly at the heart of the maritime industry.

**TS:** Do you have a message of hope or encouragement for the seafarers reading this magazine?

**SJ:** To every seafarer reading this: your work, your resilience, and your spirit are seen and valued more than ever before. You are not just moving cargo – you are moving the world. Change may feel slow at times, but momentum is building, and a growing number of leaders and companies across the industry are committed to making life at sea safer, more attractive, and more sustainable. Your voices and experiences are shaping this change – so please keep raising your voice for a better maritime future, we are listening.



*Susanne Justesen is the director of human sustainability at the Global Maritime Forum. Under her guidance, the GMF's human sustainability programme has grown significantly, expanding its focus on improving safety and human well-being both at sea and on shore, making the industry more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, and securing future skills and competences for the global maritime industry.*

# 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.

### MEDIUM LEVEL

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

### TRICKY LEVEL

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

Credit: www.sudokuoftheday.com

### MEDIUM LEVEL solution (Issue 1 2025)

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

### TRICKY LEVEL solution (Issue 1 2025)

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

## Jumble

Can you correctly unscramble these anagrams to form four words? If so, send your answers by email to [thesea@missiontoseafarers.org](mailto:thesea@missiontoseafarers.org) by July 30, 2025. All correct answers will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a Mission to Seafarers' Goodie Bag, containing a 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..."

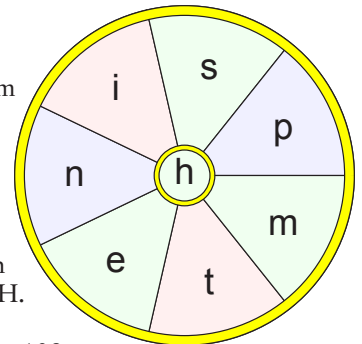
1) Rpot 2) Abortsard 3) Rnset 4) Olbubsu

March 2025 issue solutions:

1) Recycling 2) Beach 3) Steel 4) Regulation

## Word wheel

This word wheel is made from an 8-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 H.



Answer for March 2025 issue: 109 possible words, nine-letter word was Stevedore

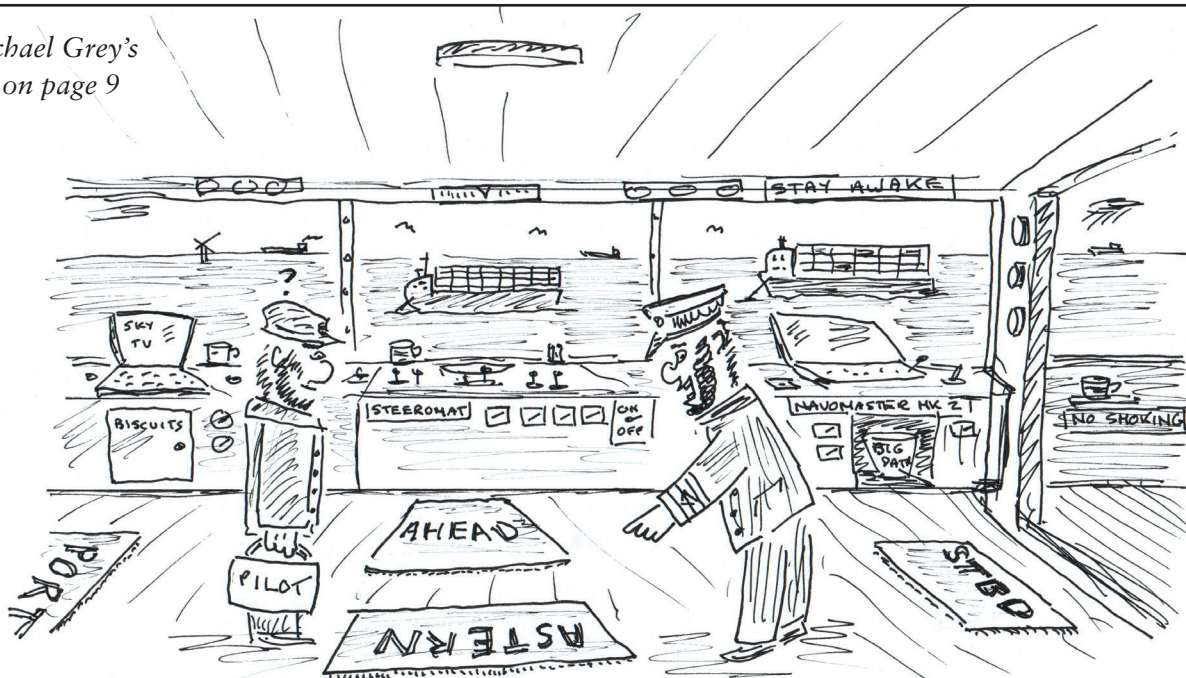
## Flag code

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

Answer for March 2025 issue: Tariffs



See Michael Grey's feature on page 9



When they moved the bridge right forward, I became disoriented

# 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 43,000 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](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports). Here you can find information about all our centres, including contact details, facilities and opening times or download our free Happy at Sea app.



## 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:thesea@missiontoseafarers.org)

The Mission to Seafarers,  
First Floor, 6 Bath Place,  
Rivington Street, London,  
EC2A 3JE, UK  
T: +44 (0)20 7248 5202  
E: [crewhelp@mtsmail.org](mailto:crewhelp@mtsmail.org)

 [www.missiontoseafarers.org](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org)  
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# Connecting seafarers worldwide

*A global perspective speaks to the unique life of a seafarer*

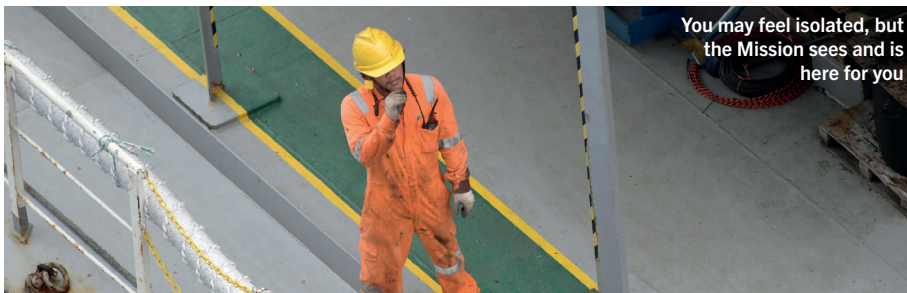
By Peter Rouch

I've got to admit it ... I'm excited! After nearly 40 years of working life, it's not often something new comes along that truly stirs that sense of anticipation. But as I write this column for The Sea, I'm glad to say – I'm feeling it!

Tomorrow, I begin a three-week journey visiting some of The Mission to Seafarers' work across Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. Many of you may have met our teams in these regions during your time at sea. For me, this will be my first visit to these places, and I'm especially excited to reconnect with someone I met far away from his home – someone we'll call Ramon.

Ramon isn't his real name, but I'll keep it confidential, as we always do at the Mission. I met Ramon in a small, remote port in Brazil. He was working on a bulk carrier transporting powdered bauxite and aluminium bars. As I visited his ship, we chatted about his home, his family, and his plans. He told me he'd be flying home the next day and wouldn't be continuing with the ship.

I remember the conversation well – perhaps because of a remarkable coincidence. As it turns out, the island in the Philippines where Ramon lives is the



Credit: Chen Te

exact place I'll be visiting on this trip. We exchanged numbers and have kept in touch. Now, Ramon and his family will be attending the event I'm going to on his island. I last saw him in a dusty corner of Brazil. Soon, I'll see him again – this time on his home soil, with his family.

It might sound like a small thing to be excited about, but to me it's nothing short of extraordinary – something that could only happen in the world of seafaring, and within an organisation like The Mission to Seafarers.


To meet someone at the mouth of the Amazon River and then see them again on a small island in the Pacific, 18,000 kilometres away – it speaks to the unique life of the seafarer. And to meet not just the seafarer, but their family too – that's The Mission to Seafarers for you.

You see, one of the key things we do in the Philippines is run our Family Support Network. While the Mission supports seafarers around the world, the Family Support Network exists to support those who wait at home. It provides relationship and parenting support, life skills and financial training, counselling, mental health awareness and, above all, a place of welcome and understanding.

That's why I'm visiting the Philippines – not only to see the work first-hand, but to connect with the people it supports. And this time, that includes Ramon and his family. I'm deeply looking forward to it.

Some of you reading this may be far from home right now. Maybe there are times you feel overwhelmed by the scale of the sea, or isolated aboard your ship. Perhaps it seems like the world doesn't fully see or understand your challenges.

But we see you. The Mission to Seafarers is here for you, in ports, through our Family Support Networks, and online via our Happy at Sea app. We're here to remind you that you are not alone. You are never forgotten.

To all of us at the Mission, this work is a reminder that God never forgets us either. Whether you are aware of His love or not, His care is real – constant, unchanging, and present wherever you are. Whatever the world brings, that care is always, everywhere, and forever.  Peter Rouch is the secretary general of The Mission to Seafarers.

PRAYER FOR SEAFARERS

*Dear Lord God,  
God of all people,  
whose care is without limit,  
your arms embrace us all as your children,  
from wherever we come,  
wherever we find ourselves,  
and whether or not we sense your presence with us.  
Open our hearts to know you,  
and may the care we receive from you  
be reflected in the care we offer to others.  
Amen*

Please donate to  
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to Seafarers**

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