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Shipping in polar waters

IMO has adopted the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code), and related amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) to make it mandatory, marking a historic milestone in the Organization's work to protect ships and people aboard them, both seafarers and passengers, in the harsh environment of the waters surrounding the two poles.

The Polar Code and SOLAS amendments were adopted during the 94th session of IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC).

The expected date of entry into force of the SOLAS amendments is 1 January 2017, under the tacit acceptance procedure. It will apply to new ships constructed after that date. Ships constructed before 1 January 2017 will be required to meet the relevant requirements of the Polar Code by the first intermediate or renewal survey, whichever occurs first, after 1 January 2018.

- Many things could have been better in the Polar Code. One of the concerning issues is the enforcement of the regulations. The competence in flag states and recognized organizations regarding polar conditions is very variable, and therefore the ability to enforce the regulations will also vary. The Polar Code requires survival training in cold conditions for the crew, but this training is put into the hands of the individual shipping company. says Head of Section of the Norwegian Maritime Officers Association (NMOA), Morten Kvem,

Ebola virus disease

IMO has issued guidance and information on protection measures for ships visiting ports in countries in West Africa affected by the Ebola virus disease (EVD), which the United Nations Security Council has declared "a threat to international peace and security".

In conjunction with shipping industry bodies, the organization has joined forces with the World Health Organization (WHO) and others in a Travel and Transport Task Force aimed at facilitating a coordinated and consistent approach to the provision of information for the air and maritime travel and transport sectors.

Updated on 10. December WHO has reported 6583 ebola-death in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. Read more on www.imo.org

36 year sentence for master of the "Sewol"

The International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA) condemns the sentence of Captain Lee Joon-Seok as a travesty of justice. This sentence and that of the other crew members may assuage public grief over this tragedy, but on its own it is compounding the victims of the event. Over 300 people, many of them school children, lost their life and this must never be forgotten. The families of those who died are victims with a lives sentence of remembering the loss of their loved one. It is a terrible burden for anyone to carry.

The question that must be asked is whether the sentence will resolve any of the issues surrounding this case. The answer is a simple NO. In the wake of the sinking there have been numerous reports, trials and sentencing of those involved in the severe problems within the Republic of Korea's domestic shipping industry. The results were people resigning or when found guilty given sentences of three years or less. It would appear to any observer looking in from the outside that the Captain and crew were used as pawns in a political game to divert attention from the industry and focus on the crew instead. The only good to come from this sentencing is the fact that the death sentence sought by the prosecutor was not upheld.

The sentence of 36 years is too severe and should Lee Joon-Seok survive he will be released at the age of 105 years. Other crew members are facing sentences of up to 30 years and so their life will be over. The reaction of the master to the situation was human. He was overwhelmed by what was taking place on his vessel. He did not react well, but should that be the reason for such a sentence. We are not born to be heroes, circumstances dictate those that do.

In 1953, the Princess Victoria was lost in the North Irish Sea. This was the first Ro-Ro to be lost and since then there have been a litany of Ro-Ros being lost with many of the passengers being lost too. Perhaps if anything can be learned from this terrible event it is that this ship type will continue to take a toll on those that use them unless major revisions of the rules of construction and the training of the crews is undertaken.

The final irony of this trial and the sentencing of the master and crew is that it comes on the day that World War I ceased and the world will be remembering all of those that lost their lives 100 years ago.

Hans Sande from the Norwegian Maritime Officers Association is the President of the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations.

New app from SRI provides a lifeline for Seafarers

Seafarers facing legal problems can now obtain immediate information concerning their rights, wherever they are in the world, with a new app formally launched today by Seafarers' Rights International (SRI) after three months of user testing.

Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of SRI said: *"Seafarers need tangible support 24/7. There are many good companies and maritime administrations who provide seafarers with assistance and support with regard to their human rights. However where that is not the case, this app will provide a lifeline for seafarers. The app has been designed to operate offline so that seafarers can access information at all times. It is compatible with iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry devices.*

The app has a unique 'Find a Lawyer' tool which gives immediate access to a database of lawyers around the world who have signed up to the SRI Charter – a statement of good practice in the provision of legal services to seafarers – and who may be able to offer assistance to seafarers facing criminal prosecution."

[Download the app here!](#)

Indonesia takes an enlightened approach to maritime security

More countries around the world should strengthen their approach to maritime security and follow in the steps of Indonesia, who will launch a new coastguard service, says leading maritime security company MAST.

"Indonesia and its President Joko Widodo have rightly recognized that maritime crime, including piracy and smuggling, can be hugely disruptive of commerce and wealth generation," said Phil Cable, Chief Executive Officer at MAST (Maritime Asset Security and Training Ltd)

The development of the coastguard is part of President Widodo's push to reassure investors that Indonesia is taking maritime security seriously. Before he was elected, he stressed Indonesia's strategic position on the world's maritime axis and her potential as a regional maritime hub.

Gerry Northwood OBE, Chief Operating Officer at MAST, said: "We now have a situation where the most far sighted countries are investing in maritime security as a means to underpin national wealth and economic development.

"The challenge they are facing is that maritime infrastructure is expensive and there is a relatively long lead time to put in place resources. Early upfront investment is required and this is what the Indonesians are doing through creating a more capable maritime police force.

"Sailors are not like soldiers. They cannot be trained in a heartbeat. Sailors and maritime police have to become competent in the marine environment before they can actually start to provide value as law enforcement officers. The same principle applies to personnel involved in environmental protection. We must also not forget that maritime operations are very often served by air operations. The ability to coordinate and link the two, means that vast swathes of ocean and littoral can be more efficiently monitored."

IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea

The 2014 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea was awarded to Captain Andreas Kristensen and his crew of the Britannia Seaways, nominated by Denmark for their courage and determination in fighting explosions and fire on board the vessel, at great risk and danger to themselves.

ITF calls for implementation of new IMO measures on safe manning

The International Transport Workers' Federation is getting set for 2015 changes in the determination of safe manning of vessels, which come as a result of new International Maritime Organization (IMO) requirements.

Over the past three years the IMO has redefined the concept of safe manning of vessels and as a result, as of January, conditions should change. Flag states and shipowners must now safely and transparently meet the unique operational and administrative needs of each vessel.

Until now minimum safe manning was certified in accordance with company proposals which were then rubber-stamped by the flag state, and which took into account only the vessel's ability to navigate and manage basic emergencies. No allowance had been made for other crew duties, taking into account frequency of port calls, cargo operations, maintenance or administrative tasks. This process has been open to abuse by companies seeking to cut costs by cutting crew size.

Minimally manned vessels have been shown to directly impact crew fatigue and have been cited in numerous high profile groundings and collisions, many of which had disastrous consequences for the seafarers and the environment.

IMO Assembly Resolution A 27/Res.1047 outlines elements to consider when determining safe manning for all functions on a vessel. In addition the Maritime Safety Committee adopted a change to SOLAS and made an amendment to the International Safety Management (ISM) Code to ensure vessels are properly manned.

ITF IMO accredited representative Branko Berlan explained, "Although regulatory changes happened in 2011 and 2012, administrations, companies and port state control inspectors have yet to implement them. The cumulative effect of these latest actions is that they will be legally required to do so." (...) "Seafarer's organisations need to become more proactive by using the media and legal system to force the proper determination of vessel manning in a transparent way. Ultimately these changes are about seafarer safety, that's why we're so keen to make sure our affiliates know about them and can take steps to make them a reality. Only a concerted effort to force the implementation of these IMO instruments will result in properly manned vessels."

The Norwegian Maritime Officers Association wishes You Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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