



Technical Bulletin

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Distractions on the bridge

Distractions on the navigation bridge are often to blame for groundings and collisions

Ninety five percent (95%) of incidents to vessels underway, particularly groundings and collisions, are attributed to human error on the part of those in charge on the navigating bridge at the time of the incident. Distractions are often to blame and these are normally caused by other duties and paperwork required to be fulfilled by watchkeeping officers.

For example, investigation into a recent collision found that the officer on watch (OOW) did not realise a close quarters situation was developing because he was too busy making entries in the Garbage Record Book. Although these duties are fair, it was certainly grossly irresponsible for the OOW to be performing these duties while navigating the vessel through a busy shipping lane.

With officers frequently experiencing high work loads and often conducting watchkeeping duties alone on the

bridge, it is recommended that master's standing orders include instructions as suggested below, to reduce the possibility of distractions on the bridge.

Mobile phones

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) recently issued Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 299 titled Interference with Safe Navigation through Inappropriate Use of Mobile Phones, regarding the effect of mobile phones on navigation and conning of the vessel, by demanding the attention of bridge personnel, at inappropriate moments.

The Report calls for a restriction on the use of mobile phones in the approaches to a port, for both incoming and outgoing calls. This could be achieved by designating pilotage, and other restricted waters, as 'red zones', in which outgoing mobile telephone calls are prohibited, and incoming calls are diverted to a message service. Use of this technique, or similar control measures, ensures that mobile telephones are not a distraction for the bridge team at a time when they should be concentrating fully on the navigation of the vessel.

Pilots employed on ships should be aware of the effect of mobile phones on sensitive navigation equipment and should be actively discouraged from their usage, particularly in the United States. Attention is drawn to LP Bulletin 290.

Computers

Many ships are operating with a computer(s) on the bridge, as is necessary for performing routine duties such as record keeping, daily communications for ship business, and personal use. The Club is concerned





about watchkeeping officers playing games on the computer, as well as writing personal e-mails, while on watch.

It is strongly recommended that computers on the bridge be cleared of all games, and

the future installation of games prohibited, as well as instructions that the computer only be used for official ship work when on watch, and never when the vessel is navigating busy waterways / channels or in close proximity to the coast or hazards, in restricted visibility / unfavourable conditions, or while making an approach / departure from port, etc.

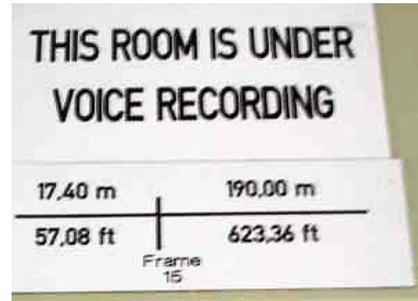
Music systems and stereos

Club inspectors are frequently finding music stations on the bridge of ships, and sometimes these are found as a semi-permanent installation. If the listening of music while on watch is accepted onboard, instructions should be promulgated to watchkeeping officers that in order to maintain a proper lookout by sight, sound and all other available means, any music being played should not be at such a level that alarms, and other signals are no longer audible.

It is strongly recommended that, like other distractions listed here, instructions state that no music is to be playing on the bridge when the vessel is navigating busy waterways / channels or in close proximity to the



coast or hazards, in restricted visibility / unfavourable conditions, at anchor, or while making an approach / departure from port, etc.



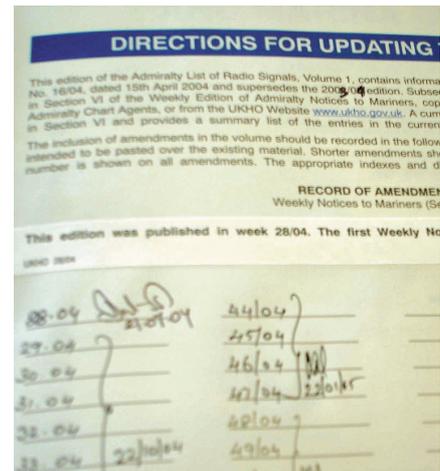
Masters should be aware that vessels are increasingly being fitted with sound recorders on the bridge, and that this might be used

as evidence in court following an incident. The playing of music could clearly be construed by the Court as a contributing factor to the incident.

The use of personal music devices such as iPods / MP3 players, where the user wears ear-phones, should never be allowed by officers on watchkeeping duties.

Paperwork

It is recognised that one of the major concerns of masters and officers is the burden of paperwork placed upon them. With a large amount of form-filling and record keeping being a part of today's culture,



it may be that a position has been born for an administration officer required on ship's, solely for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements that are in the form of record keeping, form-filling, and other administrative duties to be carried out onboard.

However, without a person onboard dedicated to such duties, masters instructions should exist to inform watchkeeping officers that for safety critical reasons, these duties cannot be performed on watch when the vessel is navigating busy waterways / channels or in close proximity to the coast or hazards, in restricted visibility / unfavourable conditions, or while making an approach / departure from port, etc.