

# LP BULLETIN

Friday 24 October 2008

## **Bulletin 606 - 10/08 - Maintaining a proper lookout during the hours of darkness - Worldwide**

**A ship management company was recently prosecuted in the UK following the grounding of a vessel in territorial waters in 2007. The incident occurred when a lone watchkeeping officer fell asleep during the hours of darkness.**

The ship management company pleaded guilty to breaches of the Collision Regulations, the International Safety Management (ISM) Code and Carriage of Cargoes Regulations, and was fined for the three offences.

A recent press notice by the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) describes how the mate was alone on the bridge during the hours of darkness at the direction of the master. The master, who was also fined as a result of the incident for not ensuring an adequate lookout, did not want the seamen keeping a watch during the hours of darkness so that they would be available as day workers. This was despite the vessel being warned three months prior to the incident, by Port State Control (PSC) authorities, that a lookout is required by the STCW Code during the hours of darkness.

“The requirement for a lookout on the bridge of a ship in the hours of darkness is clearly laid down in the Seafarers Training, Certification and Watch-keeping (STCW) Code. The Bulk Cargo (BC) Code requires monitoring equipment and records of measurements to be kept. The International Safety Management (ISM) Code requires the owners and managers of a vessel to comply with national and international requirements. The ISM Code also requires owners and managers to ensure that procedures are in place and that they are being complied with” says Paul Coley, Assistant Director Seafarers & Ships at the MCA.

This case acts as reminder to owners, managers and operators of all vessels to ensure that the bridge is properly manned at all times especially at night when in congested/pilotage waters.

Most types of claims can occur as a result of the watchkeeping officer falling asleep – from collision, hull damage, cargo damage, pollution and environmental damage, FFO and other types of property damage, to personal injury and death. Such incidents are as a result of human error, which dominates the underlying causes of major claims.

Not only is there a regulatory requirement for a lookout on the bridge during the hours of darkness but the presence of a second person is an effective control over incidents caused by lone watchkeepers falling asleep. Vessels should be adequately manned so that an effective lookout can be maintained as required.

Source of information: UK P&I Club Loss Prevention Department  
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With reference to MCA Press Notice No: 297/08  
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