

Speculation is rife and unhelpful

NI Press Release

The Nautical Institute learned with great sadness of the loss of life associated with the sinking of the *Costa Concordia* and expresses condolences to the bereaved families and sympathies to the injured and traumatised survivors. We congratulate the rescue agencies who continue to search for casualties in very difficult circumstances.

The Nautical Institute notes with extreme disquiet the alacrity with which the ship's owners, Costa Cruises, blamed all on the Master, Captain Francesco Schettino, accusing him of unprofessional conduct before any investigations could have taken place.

The Nautical Institute is also extremely uneasy with the prurient speculation in much of the world's media. Some evidence which should be in the hands of official investigators is being paraded in newspapers and television news programmes. Blatant speculation into the actions of Captain Schettino and others before, during and after the accident is being presented as fact.

Captain Schettino stands accused of very serious crimes in Italy although he at least has a lawyer acting for him. The Italian State has initiated an official investigation into the sinking of the *Costa Concordia* and the actions of her Master and crew. It would be wise to await the outcome of the official investigation and trial, if one is deemed necessary by the Italian State, before publishing speculation which only serves to make it

impossible for any defendant to receive a fair trial or for an unbiased jury to be appointed.

The Nautical Institute will continue to speak out in defence of any mariner who is subjected to less than fair treatment and who is not given the right of any human being to be considered innocent until proven guilty. (See also p3.)

New developments

Sadly, accidents are not new to our industry or indeed any other sphere of work but they need to be kept in perspective. Many developments have taken place in recent years to improve the safety record of the industry and continue into the future. ECDIS is one such technological development and we have published a good deal about it already, including Dr Andy Norris' book *ECDIS and Positioning* which should be on every ship and fleet manager's office. The UK P&I Club has also published a handy guide which we are pleased to reproduce in *Seaways* (see 1st part – pp 8-9). A proactive approach to investment in and implementation of this mandatory equipment is recommended together with effective training in its use rather than the usual lowest capital cost policy.


The same advice in essence is offered concerning ballast water treatment systems although in this area regulation has moved ahead of technology which still needs to be developed and thoroughly tested (see pp 13-14).

Meanwhile beware of the regulations in the Ukraine for the testing of ballast water and the likelihood of penalties being imposed for its chemical rather than biological content (p15).

On a more positive note, the Institute has been approached to audit the development of professional standards in the operation of the rapidly expanding fast boats sector. These are increasingly being used in many different work areas – rescue, pilotage, offshore construction, military and many others. The dangers of whole body vibration are better understood now due to research studies but this knowledge needs to be transferred to the designers, operators, their crews and passengers through effective training and publications. The need for professional standards and good seamanship in this sector are as pertinent as they are in our more usual bigger ship operations whether commercial or naval.

Finally, the report of the Council meeting in December (see pp 4-7) will update you on developments within the Institute that affect you as a member. Council's committees and the staff cover a large range of work, much of which is shared with the membership through *Seaways* during the year, so it is the more strategic issues that are debated at Council with recommendations from the committees. The AGM on May 24th will be another important milestone for the Institute with necessary changes to the governance structure and procedures being proposed.

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