

The big 'E'

Time waits for no maritime professional – as the saying goes. This is an increasingly important mantra, particularly in the age of electronic navigation and eNavigation. For those of you who ask the difference between the two, and we suspect there may be many: eNavigation is a specific work programme of the IMO to harmonise the collection, integration, exchange, presentation and analysis of navigation information. This initiative is explained by Mr John Erik Hagen (pp 14-16), who is the Chairman of the IMO eNavigation Work Groups. The strength of this IMO initiative is that it should lead to greater harmonisation of navigation information and communication on an international basis. This will be essential for safety and international trade. The weakness, however, is the time it will take to obtain agreement by all nations and stakeholders, particularly in a time of such rapid technology advancement.

Electronic navigation is with us now and is epitomised by ECDIS with GPS. We recognise that this is widely relied upon, or even over-relied upon. The training requirements for ECDIS came into force in January 2012 as per the Manila amendment to STCW, and the first phase of ECDIS carriage requirements will begin as of July 2012. Our President Captain James Robinson is quoted as saying that 'ECDIS is a complex system and will be one of the most essential tools for supporting

mariners in their efforts to ensure the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment'. The ability to harness the power of ECDIS and to avoid catastrophe due to incompetence is largely down to training and familiarisation. Many of shipping's leading international organisations have worked together to develop guidance to assist ship operators, flag states and training providers to interpret the IMO minimum requirements to maximum effectiveness. This guidance was published by the NI in February and is reproduced on pp 12-13. Mariners questioning the effectiveness of their ECDIS training should bring such guidance to the attention of their employers.

Should the importance of ECDIS be questioned, the advice given by the UK P&I Club in the second part of their three part series (pp 8-10) should be heeded. They state that 'It is becoming increasingly evident that far from reducing risk, ineffective operation of complex ECDIS systems resulting from poor management practice or training can actually increase the risk of incidents such as collision and grounding with the interface between computers extenuating the so called 'human element'. As stated in many of the Institute's publications and *Seaways* articles, ECDIS is a revolutionary change in the task of

navigation and needs to be taken extremely seriously in terms of training and onboard operational practices and procedures.

So, eNavigation will take some time to come to fruition, and current technology marches on – where does this leave us? Ideally with a balanced and pragmatic approach. Mike Sollosi is not only the Chief of the Office of Navigation Systems for the US Coast Guard, but also the Chairman of the IMO Safety of Navigation Sub-committee (Nav) and has outlined how a Coastal State has adapted, and continues to adapt, eNavigation type services in the here-and-now (pp 21-22). This article was taken from his address to the important conference on eNavigation, reported on pp 27-28.

Such technological developments and the corollary maintenance of competencies for their use, both onboard and ashore, define the commitment to being a modern maritime professional. Unfortunately, if all goes wrong casualties occur. Even at this stage, professionalism and training is essential, as outlined by John Noble (p 6), introducing the NI's *Casualty Management Guidelines*.

Conclusion

Continuing Professional Development (CPD); contribution to evolving technology; teamwork – all goals of The Nautical Institute.

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