

‘The ship remains under the control of a human being and complacency and human error are always a risk’

Yves Vanderborn, Standard P&I's director of loss prevention



Alyarmouk before casualty off Istanbul

training and has conducted several seminars with a focus on navigation and human error.”

Similarly, the MPA frequently runs programmes focused on navigational safety to encourage industry-wide efforts in safe practice and to inculcate a safety-first culture at sea. At these events, the maritime community shares safety best practice and other information, such as better communication, to improve the safe passage of vessels.

Spot checks on vessels were introduced by MPA to ensure the observance of safety standards and maintenance of safety equipment in a bid to ensure compliance with rules and regulations, with a focus on navigational and onboard safety.

Nevertheless, when mishaps occur, Vanderborn advises shipowners and managers to turn to their respective insurers – or to choose insurers that have an extensive network of experts around the world to provide immediate local assistance.

To this end, his own club launched a Singapore war risks mutual (SWRM) class in collaboration with the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) in February. The idea behind the move is to be closer to the regional maritime community and to provide these members with the range of local knowledge required. David Roberts, managing director of Charles Taylor Mutual Management, which manages the Standard Club, said the SWRM class would provide shipowners with “real time advice, service, and claims handling”. The SWRM class marks the country’s first mutual war risk insurance and will give P&I war coverage of up to USD550 million, as well as war coverage of up to the insured value of the ship. ■

## Insurer acts on evolving tanker safety regulation

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Standard P&I Club loss prevention director Yves Vanderborn has told *IHS Maritime* that tanker safety regulations have evolved in the right direction but onboard training needs greater focus.

The international marine environmental convention, MARPOL, has been revised and amended a number of times to address and enforce safety regulations on oil tankers, and tanker safety has come a long way since the original MARPOL, enforced in 1983, was signed on 17 February 1973.

Changes and revisions have occurred in reaction to a series of oil tanker spillage incidents, such as those involving *Exxon Valdez*, *Erika*, and *Prestige*, so much so that Vanderborn said tanker safety nowadays is no longer comparable with the era before the *Exxon Valdez*. Tankers, he said, have changed both structurally

and procedurally, with oil majors now taking a much bigger interest in the quality of their ships, and by also having much more stringent minimum requirements.

But despite having well-designed tankers, maritime accidents still occur and are often attributed to human error, navigation, or piloting mistakes

made by the master and crew.

Vanderborn pointed out that a number of collisions in the straits of Malacca and Singapore have been the result of navigational mistakes and human error. In some cases, the collision has

resulted in spillage of crude oil.

For instance, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) received a report in the early hours of 2 January 2015 that

the Libyan-registered, 116,039dwt oil tanker *Alyarmouk* had collided with a Singapore-registered bulk carrier *Sinar Kapuas* in the South China Sea about 11 n miles northeast of Horsburgh lighthouse. The collision caused an estimated spillage of 4,500 tonnes of crude oil in the vicinity but fortunately it was quickly contained with no injury reported and did not affect vessel traffic in the area.

Commenting on this incident, Vanderborn said such mishaps could be minimised through enhanced safety training of the crew. “The risk of a collision for a tanker ship is the same or only slightly less compared with non-tanker ships. In general, the level of training on board a tanker is higher but the ship remains under the control of a human being and complacency and human error are always a risk,” he warned, adding, “The Standard Club continually encourages its members to enhance onboard

### Key points

- Human error and navigation mistakes are still the main culprits for tanker accidents
- Enhancing onboard training and getting an insurer with local assistance are the best safeguards

# 4,500 tonnes

Amount of crude oil spilled following the *Alyarmouk* collision in January

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