

# NAVIGATIONAL AUDITS

The club carried out 396 condition surveys in 2011/12 and over the past three years, the club has carried out 169 risk reviews on members' safety management systems. Sometimes these have taken place following a major navigational incident. These reviews have delivered a number of findings and one of these is that only a few companies carry out effective navigational audits. The club surveyors have seen, for example, engineer superintendents carrying out navigational audits whilst the ship is alongside. It is fair to say that a port inspection of a passage plan, chart corrections and compass errors, etc. is not equivalent to a navigational audit. In order to carry out an effective navigational audit, an experienced person with bridge watchkeeping knowledge needs to see the watchkeepers in action.

A recent innovation presently being developed, which will become available for general use by the end of 2012, is a system where bridge activity is continuously monitored and analysed remotely. This monitoring when analysed will give useful information, for example, how often was the under-keel clearance or closest position of approach parameters contravened; how many times did a helm order produce an angle of list that exceed the company's laid-down limit; have shipping channels/traffic separation schemes been adhered to. Many navigational parameters can be set, remotely monitored and infringement trends analysed, and subsequent corrective actions and/or additional training can be provided. This is similar to what happens in the airline industry today. Shipping companies should consider these remotely managed, continuous navigational monitoring techniques in the future, especially where navigational mistakes could not only be expensive but also critical to the company's reputation.

We know of one member who is considering analysing the bridge VDR on a regular basis to supplement navigational audits to see if any navigational errors can be identified. Navigational incidents are where the shipowner's largest risks lie. Navigational audits are a good way to properly evaluate those risks.

# CONCLUSION

This issue of Standard Safety is unable to cover every scenario where P&I claims involving navigational errors occur, but there is overriding evidence that:

- the number of navigational incidents is increasing
- the cost of navigational incidents is increasing
- the impact of navigational incidents on company reputations is becoming more serious
- the predominant cause of these navigational incidents is human error due to poor training and auditing for compliance with COLREGS and SMS procedures.

Preventing these accidents is not difficult. The techniques for safe navigation are widely known and when mastered and professionally carried out, the navigational risks are reduced.

## OUR KEY ADVICE IS:

- learn from your and other people's mistakes
- engender a safe and professional navigational culture
- keep a proper and effective lookout
- know, understand and apply the collision regulations correctly
- conduct comprehensive briefings when taking over the watch
- maintain a frequent check on the ship's position by appropriate means
- assess navigators' competence when they are new to the company or ship
- provide support to watchkeepers in high-risk areas
- provide guidance for watchkeepers to mitigate the risk of fatigue
- monitor the pilot's actions
- have a 'challenge and response' culture towards pilots and master's actions
- understand that the human element plays a major role in the causation of accidents
- use effective navigational audits to reduce risk.

