



## Marine Notice 7/2009

### Bridge Resource Management (BRM) and Torres Strait Pilotage

Seafarers, shipowners and pilots are reminded of the importance of well-planned Bridge Resource Management (BRM) and efficient watch keeping techniques to enhance safety and reduce human and systemic errors in navigating ships. Mariners should be familiar with the provisions of Marine Orders Part 28 “Operations Standards and Procedures”, the STCW Convention 1978, as amended, Chapter VIII – Watchkeeping and the requirement to plan their voyage.

Australian communities are sensitive to incidents that adversely affect the marine environment such as collisions or groundings in ports, harbours, or other waterways including the Great Barrier Reef and other environmentally sensitive regions - particularly if such incidents result in pollution.

Effective BRM should begin at the initial passage planning stage and include full consideration of the following for berth to berth operations:

- Navigation and operational tasks and responsibilities should be clearly defined and delegated;
- Dangers that may be met at all stages of each voyage and the precautions and contingency arrangements necessary to manage these risks should be identified;
- Priorities should be set and constantly reviewed;
- The vessel’s position, speed, and heading with respect to other vessels and all navigation hazards should be continuously monitored;
- Monitoring of the vessels navigation against the authorised passage plan should be continuous;

- Deviation from the authorised passage plan or standard operating procedures should be noted and acted upon immediately;
- Electronic aids should be used in an informed and careful manner; and
- Support for the master and pilot when navigating should be sufficient and positive at all times.

Vessels engaged in regular short voyages where the nature of the trade is such that they are frequently under some form of pilotage are of concern. In these circumstances, there may be a tendency to ignore (through familiarity/complacency) the need to constantly review and revise the passage plan.

Analysis of maritime incidents suggests that up to 80 per cent are caused by human error and not by mechanical breakdown or lack of competency. Many incidents are attributed to “single person” error, where a mistake made by one person was not noticed or corrected by other members of the bridge team in time to prevent an incident from occurring, e.g. an incorrectly applied helm order. Where marine casualties have occurred with a pilot on board, many have been attributed to flawed master/pilot relationships. In many cases, when the pilot boarded the ship, the master and deck officers ceased to monitor the navigation and the position of the ship.

The master and the bridge team should remember that they are always responsible for, and are in charge of the safe navigation of the ship, even when navigating with a pilot in accordance with Section 410B of the *Navigation Act 1912*, provision 7 of Marine Orders Part 54 (Coastal Pilotage) and 49 of Section A-VIII/2 of the STCW Code.

Australian pilots expect masters and watch keepers to participate fully in the navigation of their ship during pilotage. The master and the deck officers must continue to monitor the safe passage of the ship, critically appraise the pilot's advice and incorporate the pilot fully into the bridge team in a mutually supportive manner to ensure efficient and safe navigation. All BRM procedures still apply when a pilot boards the ship, and the bridge team should conduct a pre-passage briefing together with the pilot to ensure a shared view of the intended passage prior to its execution.

## **Torres Strait Pilotage**

Pursuant to International Maritime Organization Resolution MEPC.133(53), which designated the Torres Strait as an extension of the Great Barrier Reef Particularly Sensitive Sea Area, if a vessel passes through the Torres Strait and it does not comply with Australia's system of pilotage for merchant ships 70 metres in length and over or

oil tankers, chemical tankers, and gas carriers, irrespective of size, the Government of Australia will notify the vessel's Flag State, Owner, Operator and Master that the vessel failed to take a pilot and henceforth cannot enter an Australian port without the risk of the Owner, Operator and/or Master of the vessel being subject to a non-custodial penalty under Australian law.

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