

Closing the loop

We have written and spoken out many times over the years about the need for effective communications to operate safely and efficiently. It is a subject that forms a key part of the leadership training standards the Institute devised a few years ago, and against which we accredit leadership training providers, and we are pleased that leadership training is now to be included in the revised STCW Convention and Code which will be adopted at a Diplomatic Conference in Manila next June.

There are many forms of effective communication and we are fortunate this month to have two articles providing excellent examples of different forms. Captain Malcolm Goodfellow, an Australian pilot, shares with us his experience of continuing professional development at the Star Cruises training simulator in Malaysia that is regularly used by the Australian pilotage authorities (pp 25-26).

The aspect that he focuses on in particular is closed loop communications to ensure that orders given are received by the right person, understood, carried out correctly, and acknowledged to have been carried out by the person giving the order. This process ensures that there is no ambiguity in the communications loop and that other members of the bridge

team also hear what is going on and can therefore monitor the operations effectively. The importance of this procedure can be readily ascertained by studying any number of our MARS reports or flag state accident investigation reports which regularly highlight ineffective communications and lack of understanding of what is required.

Similarly, but using the written word, Captain Christopher Rynd, a cruise ship master and also part of his company's training team, provides advice on unambiguous collision avoidance orders in his Standing and Night Orders for watchkeeping officers (pp 23-24). He advocates giving clear, numerical values to such aspects as when to call the master rather than the usual 'call me if concerned about the situation' and what constitutes safe passing distances.

These values should be set with the characteristics of the vessel in mind and adapted for the prevailing conditions and circumstances. They should also be developed with the active input of the officers so that there is full understanding and acceptance of them. The master may then rest easy in the knowledge that he or she will be called in good time to assist the watchkeeper when needed and that action will be taken in good time to avoid close quarters situations.

Both these articles also highlight the advantages and importance of simulator training where these procedures can be tested and practised in a controlled and safe environment. The debriefing of a simulator exercise is another form of closed loop communication and is crucial to the effectiveness of the training so that the lessons of the exercise are fully understood and learned. Undoubtedly, many of these points will be explored at the Institute's AGM Seminar in Cork which is being organised by the Ireland Branch (see back cover) the booking form for which is now available on our website.

President's Questionnaire 2010

The survey form to provide input for the Institute's Strategic Plan 2011-2015 is now available on our website for online completion or hardcopy download. This is your opportunity to indicate what you wish the Institute to focus on for the next five years, so please take a few minutes to complete the Questionnaire. Thank you.

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■ Cover picture: Ships laid up on the River Fal, Cornwall, UK at the end of 2009 included the ro-ro cargo vessel *Al Mahmoud Orient*. Photograph © Krispen Atkinson