

# conferences

## Command Seminar series 2008: Hong Kong

### Captain Vikrant Malhotra MNI

The final leg of the Command Seminar Series was held on board the *Star Pisces* alongside the Ocean Terminal, Hong Kong on 6 November, 2008. The 'maritime cluster' of Hong Kong was well represented and there were a number of international delegates among the 100 present, including one from as far away as Chile.

The keynote speaker, Roger Tupper Director of Marine, HKSAR government, set the pace for the seminar. He briefly reminded delegates about the advent of the ISM Code and the flag state's role in its implementation before zeroing-in on the core topic of the day's discussion, the qualification requirements for the DP. In his opinion, it is preferable that the Designated Person (DP) be an ex-mariner holding a senior management position in the company. These attributes would help the DP to influence the mind-set, attitude and behaviour of subordinates effectively and ensure that proper shore-side support would be given to ships' crews. In Hong Kong, most leading companies had appointed a senior officer as their DP and the effectiveness of this was clearly visible in the experience of the flag state, as the safety standards of these companies were better than those where this function is carried out by an officer of lower rank.

Following with the regulator's viewpoint, Captain Sameer Sablok read a paper on behalf of Captain Ashok Mahapatra, Head, Maritime Training and the Human Element, IMO, who was unable to attend in person. This highlighted IMO *Guidelines*. The IMO allows flexibility to companies for implementing the ISM Code, so a small four-to-six ship company may have its DP carrying out multiple functions, whereas a large organisation may assign the job to a single individual or team of persons exclusively dedicated to this function. It is up to the company to review its individual requirements and implement a process which works best in ensuring that it complies with the requirements of the code. (See Captain Mahapatra's article, pp 23-25.)

Captain Pradeep Chawla, Director, *Seaways* April 2009

Quality Assurance and Training – Anglo Eastern Ship Management, highlighted the varied interpretations of the Code, ranging from the DP as a senior manager with direct access to the highest level of management and ensuring adequate resources, to a DP being a day-to-day operator, monitoring ship safety meetings, inspection reports, drill reports, maintenance records etc. He was strongly of the opinion that the DP should be a 'leader' or a 'process manager' rather than a 'doer' or line manager.

Georg Smejjell, Deputy Head of Section, DNV Maritime Management Systems, also said that expecting the DP to be responsible for the entire administration of the management system, documentation and planning and the conducting of internal audits may represent an erroneous view. He also expressed the view, as did some of the previous speakers, that the DP should be a process manager ensuring effectiveness of management systems rather than a person involved in practical implementation.

Arthur Bowring, Managing Director, HKSOA, and Captain Deepak Honawar, Director, Safety-Insurance-QMS, Wallem Shipmanagement, highlighted some interesting incidents relating to the role of the DP in practice and the excessive paperwork related to the ISM Code.

He included the case of a chief cook giving a call to the DP, informing him that the master had assaulted him, and another case where an anonymous caller informed the DP that the chief engineer was involved in selling bunkers.

Dr Phil Anderson, Managing Director, Consult ISM Ltd, UK, presented the audience with the other side of the coin. 'Has the ISM Code been hijacked by the lawyers?' and 'Do DPs require personal liability insurance?' were two of the questions he raised which left the audience thoughtful. Dr Anderson said that he saw the DP as a 'doer' or a person involved at the sharp end of implementation.

Captain Lothair Lam, Port Captain/Assistant Manager – Operation Department, Parakou Shipping Limited, speaking on behalf of seafarers, considered that the DP was the saviour of safety on board. In the pre-ISM era, the vessel's superintendent wore several hats, including

that of safety officer, he said. Under the ISM Code, this function is now handled in a more focused manner by the Designated Person.

### Conclusion

This last seminar in the command seminar series stirred up an excellent debate with an almost endless Q&A session. The summation session included feedback from the three earlier seminars at Glasgow, Panama and Antwerp. There were several questions left unanswered, reinforcing the fact that the Role of the DP is not clearly defined and/or understood by many within the industry.

■ Command Seminars: conclusions, pp 26-27.



▲ Among the speakers, Dr Phil Anderson, left and Captain Richard Coates, President of The Nautical Institute, right



▲ Captain Marso Law, Senior Harbour Pilot, NIHK Branch Chairman and Captain Deepak Honawar



▲ Captain Marso Law with Captain Lothair Ming Fung Lam