

CHIRP MARITIME

INDUSTRY NEEDS TO EMPOWER SEAFARERS WITH 'STOP WORK' AUTHORITY

Mr. Adam Parnell, Director (Maritime), CHIRP, refers to lessons learned from their publications and data which have highlighted that much work still needs to be done to improve maritime safety. In that regard, empowering seafarers with 'stop work' authority and adopting a 'just culture' such as in the aviation industry can bring outstanding results.



SAFETY4SEA: What are currently the key challenges for shipping from your perspective? What are your suggestions to move forward?

Adam Parnell: The reports that we (CHIRP) receive provide evidence that much still needs to be done to improve maritime safety. Our data suggests that vessels crewed to minimum safe levels are too often being asked to deliver beyond their capacities, leading to crew fatigue, mental health issues and corner-cutting. It is imperative that these are addressed before novel fuels, decarbonization, AI and autonomy become main stream, because the new technologies will most likely be more complex and less forgiving than at present.

S4S: What are the top priorities in your agenda for the next five years?

A.P.: There is an adage which says "Learn from the mistakes of others; you don't live long enough to make

them all yourself." Because of understandable commercial and reputational concerns only a few companies are currently prepared to share their incident or accident data outside of vessel or company boundaries, but this means that the same (often painful or expensive) incidents recur elsewhere. Because of our history of being a 'neutral broker', CHIRP is developing a common repository and data-sharing tools that will allow companies to share their safety learning confidentially, essentially by removing the data that could point back to the vessel or company. It will equally allow for the sharing positive learning ie from things that went right. We aim to have this piloted in 2023 and then begin to roll out more widely in the following years.

S4S: Tell us a few words about CHIRP Maritime's Feedback editions. What are the key lessons learned?

A.P.: We anonymize and publish a selection of the reports that we receive to raise awareness of safety issues and to share the lessons across the industry. These are published in 8 different common seafarer languages including English, Chinese, Indonesian, Filipino, Ukrainian, so that we can reach as many seafarers in their first language as possible. They're available online, via social media or email subscription (all of which are free) and we know that many companies refer to them during safety training sessions. The key issues that arise time and again are fatigue, competing pressures on a person's time, and becoming distracted.

S4S: Through your editions and reports, have you identified any alarming areas/topics for industry's stakeholders to consider? What are your suggestions to move forward?

A.P.: There are several areas that are

evident: the first is that enforcement of the many regulations that are there to protect seafarers and keep them safe is lacking. We frequently receive photos of equipment that is clearly unsafe to use or which has not been adequately maintained for months (sometimes years) and which ought to result in a vessel's detention. The second is that some of the more unscrupulous companies treat seafarers as a commodity, and place commercial delivery above safety. And although these appear to be in the minority, they nevertheless exist.

S4S: How should industry stakeholders work to improve life on-board and foster seafarers' resilience?

A.P.: There are several great initiatives in this area, but they are not applied universally. Allowing seafarers adequate rest and recuperation is one of the most powerful of these. Even one additional watchkeeper over and above the minimum statutory number can make a huge difference.

S4S: Why do you believe young people should consider a future within the maritime industry? What advice would you give to the next generation of shipping?

A.P.: A career in maritime can be exceptionally attractive and fulfilling and I would recommend it to anybody. No two days are the same, and the variety of tasks is immense. The only advice I would give is to be responsible for your own safety and do not accept unreasonable risks.

S4S: What actions should we take to collectively create an inclusive and attractive industry?

A.P.: The aviation industry's 'just' culture is one that the maritime industry might consider adopting because it focuses on 'why?' of an accident rather than the 'who?' because the latter seeks scapegoats rather than solu-

tions. In more than half the incident reports that we receive, the root cause lies in the boardroom, not the bridge!

S4S: If you could change one thing in the shipping industry from your perspective, what would it be and why?

A.P.: Empower seafarers with 'stop work' authority to allow safety concerns to be addressed. A good example would be empowering a marine pilot to refuse to use a dangerously rigged pilot ladder. We receive many reports from pilots who say that they feel that they have no choice because they fear for their job security. This needs to change.

Vessels crewed to minimum safe levels are often being asked to deliver beyond their capacities, leading to crew fatigue and mental health issues.