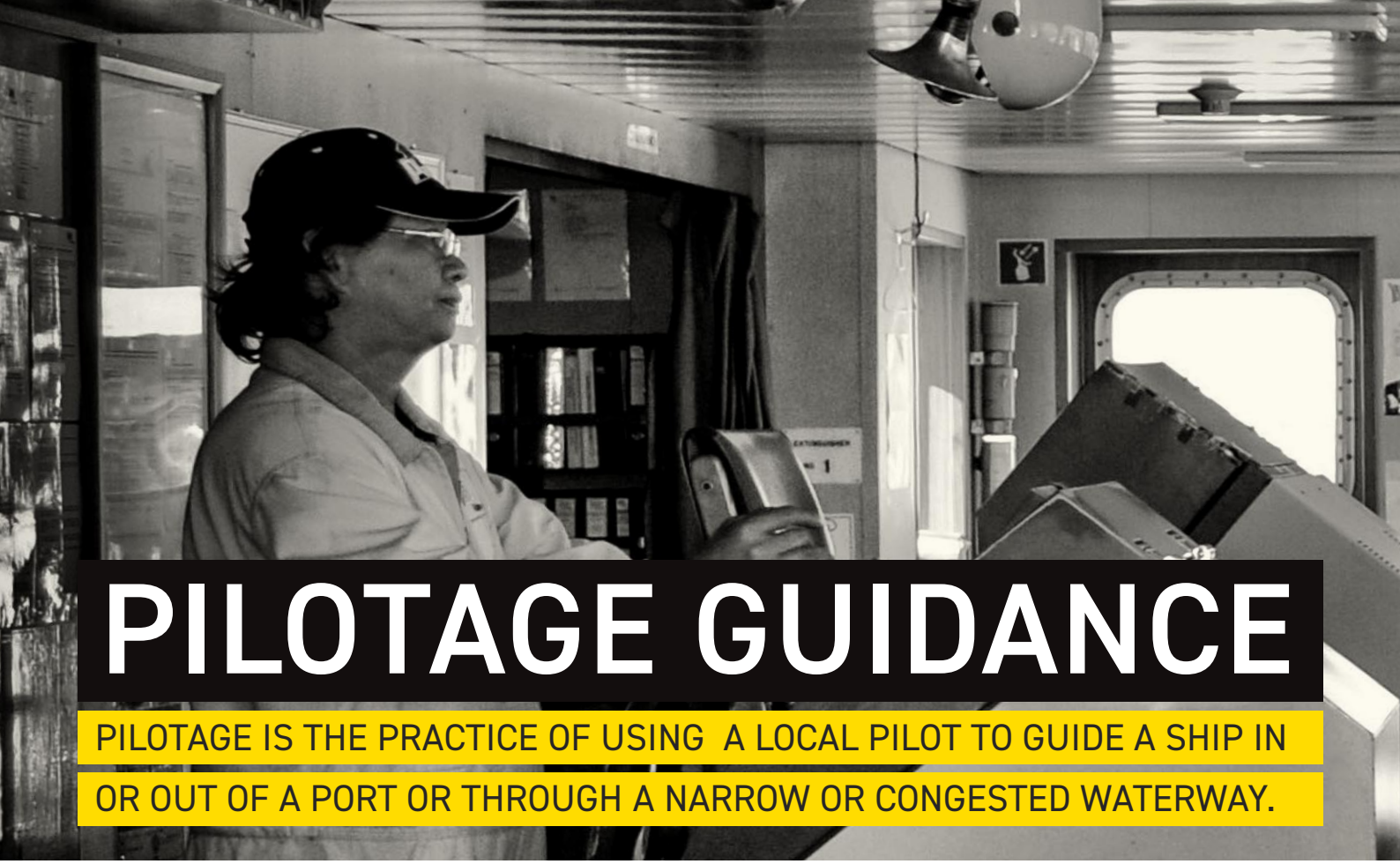

PILOTAGE GUIDANCE

PILOTAGE IS THE PRACTICE OF USING A LOCAL PILOT TO GUIDE A SHIP IN OR OUT OF A PORT OR THROUGH A NARROW OR CONGESTED WATERWAY.

PILOTS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL WATERS AND CAN HELP TO ENSURE THE SAFE PASSAGE OF SHIPS. HOWEVER, PILOTAGE CAN ALSO BE A HIGH-RISK ACTIVITY AND THE CLUB CONTINUES TO SEE INCIDENTS INVOLVING SHIPS UNDER PILOTAGE. THESE INCIDENTS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE BRIDGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (BRM) DURING PILOTAGE.

BRM IS A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO MANAGING THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON THE BRIDGE, INCLUDING THE MASTER, PILOT AND OTHER BRIDGE TEAM MEMBERS. IT INVOLVES ESTABLISHING CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY AND REGULARLY TRAINING CREW MEMBERS. EFFECTIVE BRM CAN HELP TO PREVENT INCIDENTS DURING PILOTAGE BY ENSURING THAT EVERYONE ON THE BRIDGE IS WORKING TOGETHER TO GUARANTEE THE SAFE PASSAGE OF THE SHIP.

This article extends the Club's previous guidance covering Ship Pilotage and Intervention. In this article a case study is analysed to further highlight common themes within pilotage related claims.

Jacob Damgaard
Divisional Director, Loss Prevention Singapore
jdamgaard@tindallriley.com

CASE STUDY

The master received information from the pilot regarding the planned berthing procedure, which included a 180-degree turn to port side. Two tugboats were positioned on the starboard side of the ship, forward and aft. Before initiating the turn, the pilot informed the master that he believed the tugboats currently in use were underpowered for the intended manoeuvre. As a result, the pilot decided to rely on the main engine and rudder to assist with the turn.

The master then issued a command to turn the helm hard port. However, since the main engine was stopped, the ship did not respond to the helm. To compensate for this, the order was given to move forward at a slow speed while requesting the tugboats to apply maximum force in pushing the ship. Unfortunately, shortly after implementing these measures, the master observed the distance between the vessel and the jetty diminishing rapidly, indicating a high risk of collision. Consequently, the master ordered the ship to move in full astern and instructed the crew to drop the port side anchor. Regrettably, despite these actions, the vessel was unable to avoid making contact with the jetty.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Master-pilot Exchange (MPX)

It was apparent that an effective MPX had not been conducted. Carrying out an MPX under time pressure may lead to insufficient information exchange and, in extreme cases, situations where various sections of the pilot card and the MPX checklist are not discussed and merely ticked to show compliance. A timely challenge from the master should assist in discussing the plan in sufficient detail and provide the opportunity to consider the risks and contingencies. In the case study, given the pilot's consideration that the tugs were underpowered for the turn, more effective planning should have taken place. A slower approach speed should have been used, especially because of the narrow and short approaching distance to the berth.

Ineffective Intervention

The master also failed to challenge the pilot's plan in the case study. The most common reason why individuals refrain from a safety intervention is related to personal concerns that the intervention may result in a defensive or angry reaction. Intervention may be a difficult skill to learn and personnel may require mentoring in this respect. It is recommended that masters and other bridge team members receive such mentoring and the practice of challenging colleagues is embedded through training and navigational assessments.

Contingency Planning

Decisions taken without considering all available alternatives or operational limitations may turn out to be sub-optimal. This risk could be mitigated by an effective risk assessment and contingency plan. These would also support effective decision making while on passage and the outcome should be integrated into the MPX. In the case study, the underpowered tugs meant that there was little room for error when conducting the turn. Contingency planning is vital to avoid decisions being made under excessive time pressure and without adequate consideration.

Detecting Insufficient Situational Awareness

While not applicable to the above incident, enhanced situational awareness can often be the difference between an incident occurring or not. Appropriate communication and rehearsed escalation practices should assist in detecting and addressing inadequate situational awareness.

The master of a ship has the right and duty to intervene if they believe that the actions of a pilot could endanger the safety of the ship. However, there are a number of difficulties that can make intervention challenging, such as the pilot being the most experienced person on the bridge and the master not feeling confident enough to intervene. Despite these difficulties, it is important for masters to be prepared to intervene, or challenge the pilot in a timely manner.

This can be done by training masters and bridge team members on the importance of intervention and when to intervene, providing sufficient company support and through embedding an effective safety culture.

The Club has created a poster to be used on board ships to help share the guidance. We have sent the poster out with this issue of Risk Watch. If you require additional copies please contact us via email: **britanniacommunications@tindallriley.com**