September 2024

CREW WATCH

SAILORS' SOCIETY: PIONEERING SEAFARER WELLBEING IN A CHANGING MARITIME INDUSTRY

BRITANNIA
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TO THE LATEST EDITION OF CREW WATCH

Welcome to the latest edition of Crew Watch, where we continue to prioritise the safety, wellbeing and professional development of seafarers.

JESSIE DUNN
EDITOR

Our goal is to bring you the most relevant insights and guidance for life at sea, addressing both the challenges and opportunities in the maritime industry.

In this issue, we delve into critical topics such as managing chronic conditions onboard, protecting hearing health, advice for using social media and preventing hazardous situations such as girting during tug operations. We also highlight the invaluable work of organisations like the Sailors' Society, whose pioneering efforts are shaping the future of seafarer welfare.

As always, we aim to empower you with knowledge and tools to ensure a safe, healthy and fulfilling career at sea. Thank you for being part of our community, and we hope you find this issue both informative and inspiring.

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HARBOUR TUG ASSISTANCE: UNDERSTANDING & PREVENTING GIRTING

JACOB DAMGAARD,
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HARBOUR TUG ASSISTANCE PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE SMOOTH AND SAFE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF LARGE OCEANGOING SHIPS. WHILE THESE OPERATIONS ARE OFTEN SEEN AS ROUTINE, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL INVOLVED PARTIES ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE RISK OF GIRTING AS IT MAY HAVE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES FOR A TUG.

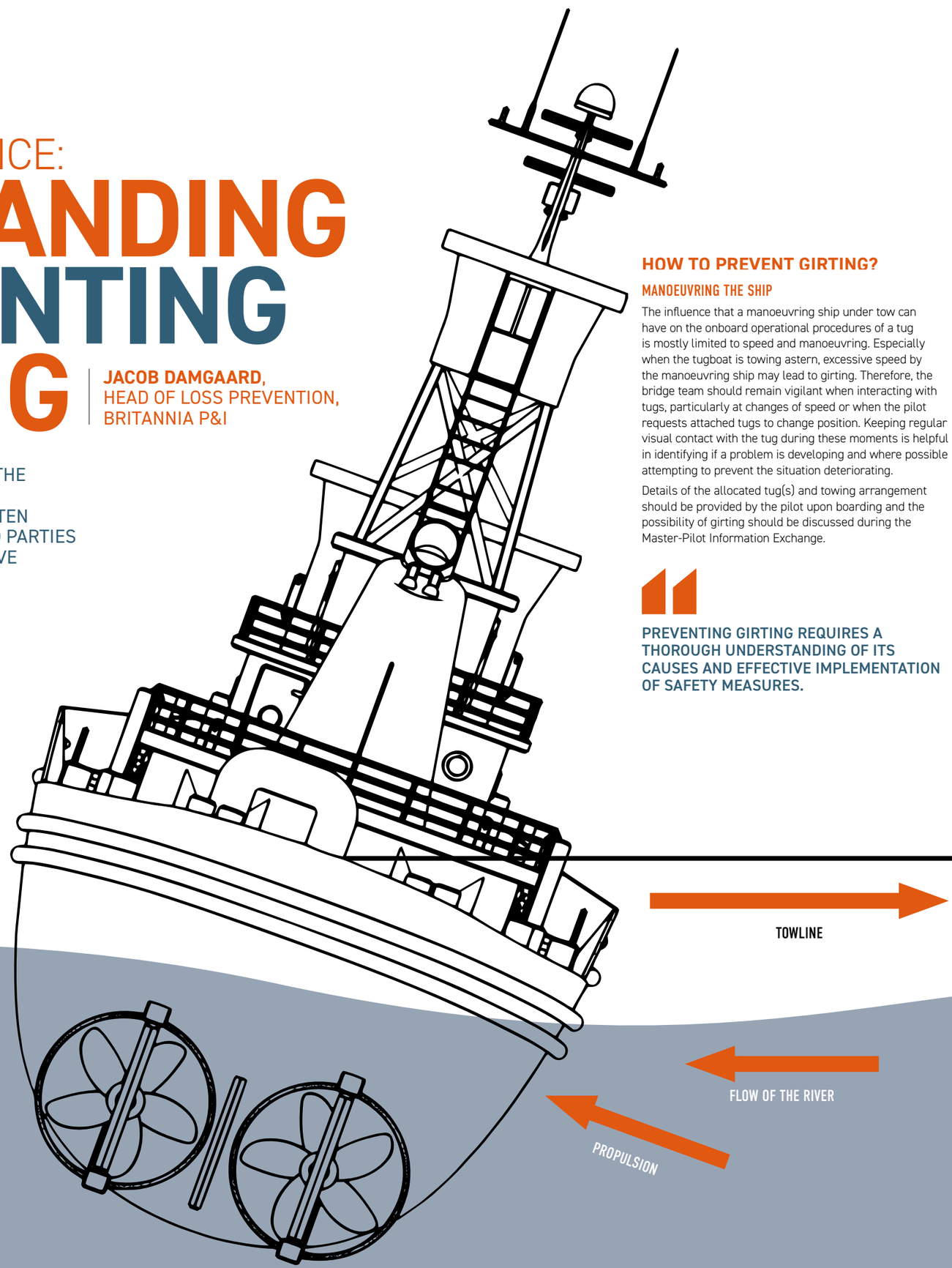
WHAT IS GIRTING?

Girting refers to the situation whereby a tug is towed broadside by a towline and is unable to manoeuvre out of this position. Deck-edge immersion then occurs, quickly followed by flooding and capsizing, unless the towline is released in good time. This can happen very quickly and does not allow the tug crew enough time to abandon the tug before it capsizes.

Girting is particularly hazardous to conventional single screw tugs. Tractor and azimuth stern drive (ASD) tugs are less likely to girt because the tug master can produce significant thrust in all directions to maintain the tow alignment. Towing from a point near amidships on a conventional tug is inherently unstable and can result in situations where the load on the towline can heel the tug over to a large and dangerous angle.

GIRTING

Girting happens when a vessel is pulled broadside by a towline force and is unable to manoeuvre out of this position.



Source: Transportation Safety Board of Canada

HOW TO PREVENT GIRTING?

MANOEUVRING THE SHIP

The influence that a manoeuvring ship under tow can have on the onboard operational procedures of a tug is mostly limited to speed and manoeuvring. Especially when the tugboat is towing astern, excessive speed by the manoeuvring ship may lead to girting. Therefore, the bridge team should remain vigilant when interacting with tugs, particularly at changes of speed or when the pilot requests attached tugs to change position. Keeping regular visual contact with the tug during these moments is helpful in identifying if a problem is developing and where possible attempting to prevent the situation deteriorating.

Details of the allocated tug(s) and towing arrangement should be provided by the pilot upon boarding and the possibility of girting should be discussed during the Master-Pilot Information Exchange.

PREVENTING GIRTING REQUIRES A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY MEASURES.

TUGBOAT(S)

Training - The tugboat crew must be properly trained in the causes and possibility of girting. Avoiding excessive loads and ensuring proper weight distribution can minimise the risk of overturning. Ensuring proper weight distribution can minimise the overturning moment of the towing gear and avoid excessive loads. Tug crews should develop and practice their emergency response procedure for the possibility of girting and subsequent capsize.

Quick release – It is crucial to have a reliable quick-release mechanism in place. This mechanism should be easily activated from both the local area and the wheelhouse to ensure a swift response in case of emergencies. Regular and competent maintenance of the equipment is vital to ensure its proper functioning.

Watertight integrity – During towing operations, it is important to keep all openings closed to prevent water ingress and maintain stability, including watertight doors. A checklist that includes a verification of closed arrangements should be utilised. In the event of tension in the towline causing the tug to tilt and the deck edge to be submerged, having watertight integrity on the weather deck will provide a crucial delay in down flooding. This delay allows for the activation of the quick release mechanism, manoeuvring the tug to reduce tension in the towline, and enabling personnel to safely escape from the engine room and accommodation area to the deck. To ensure the effectiveness of these safety measures, regular inspection and testing of watertight and weathertight doors, hatches, vents, windows, ports, side scuttles, seals, securing devices, and automatic closing devices on ventilators should be included in the tugboat's planned maintenance system.

Use of gog/gob wire – Using a gog/gob wire can provide additional stability and control, further enhancing the safety of tugboat operations. This arrangement should be adjusted correctly in accordance with industry standards, and often the gog wire should not exceed half the distance between the bulwarks or crash rails. In cases where a central securing point is not available, gog wires may be connected to padeyes on both sides of the main deck aft. This can help limit the transverse movement of the towline, ensuring safer towing operations.

SUMMARY

Preventing girting requires a thorough understanding of its causes and effective implementation of safety measures. Key strategies include proper training for tug operators and employing advanced towing techniques as required. Regular maintenance and inspection of towing equipment also plays a crucial roles in mitigating the risk of girting. Furthermore, it is important that the bridge team of a manoeuvring ship is familiar with girting to avoid the use of excessive speed or manoeuvring that may lead to girting.

CREW WATCH | WELLBEING

SAILORS' SOCIETY

PIONEERING SEAFARER WELLBEING IN A CHANGING MARITIME INDUSTRY

THE MARITIME INDUSTRY IS TRANSFORMING, WITH A GROWING EMPHASIS ON THE WELLBEING OF SEAFARERS. AT THE FOREFRONT OF THIS SHIFT IS SAILORS' SOCIETY, AN INTERNATIONAL MARITIME WELFARE CHARITY SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN NEED DAY AND NIGHT, 365 DAYS A YEAR. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, **JOHAN SMITH**, HEAD OF WELLNESS AT SAILORS' SOCIETY, SHARED INSIGHTS INTO THE ORGANISATION'S INITIATIVES, COLLABORATIONS AND THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF SEAFARER WELLBEING.

A LEGACY OF SUPPORT AND INNOVATION

Founded in 1818, Sailors' Society has a long history serving seafarers and their families. The organisation provides a wide range of services, from crisis response to wellness programmes, aiming to empower seafarers to look after their wellbeing. By addressing both immediate needs and long-term challenges, Sailors' Society plays a crucial role in supporting the maritime community and ensuring that the vital work of seafarers is recognised.

The charity also plays a significant role in supporting shipping companies to support their crew via their Wellness at Sea programme. The programme gives seafarers the tools to manage issues such as loneliness, money worries, stress and relationship breakdown before they become a crisis. Using its unique circle of care approach, Sailors' Society supports seafarer wellbeing across every area of their lives and careers, giving them the best opportunity to enjoy a fulfilling and productive career at sea.

The organisation's Crisis Response Network has provided 24/7 care and support to seafarers, their families and shipping companies following critical incidents. The crisis response team have handled anything from assisting seafarers who were wrongfully jailed to helping seafarers who were left abandoned on vessels. These success stories highlight Sailors' Society's impact on individuals and their families.

DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

The society's data-driven approach has been pivotal in shaping its new services. By collecting data from the e-learning platform, peer support groups and conferences, the organisation can identify emerging trends and tailor its programmes to meet the actual needs of seafarers. The focus is not just on gathering data for its own sake, but on ensuring that seafarers' voices guide the organisation, aligning its services with industry needs. The society understands the importance of engaging with seafarers and cadets to truly grasp their needs. This approach was particularly valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling Sailors' Society to adapt its support systems and continue reaching seafarers worldwide, despite restrictions on traditional engagement methods.

The pandemic also led to virtual cadet conferences for maritime professionals and current students. These conferences address wellbeing and mental health, preparing cadets for long and fulfilling careers at sea. Not only do these events equip new cadets with essential knowledge, but they also provide the organisation with invaluable insights into the future employers and educators of these cadets. The data and analysis gathered from these global events contribute to their cadet reports.

Sailors' Society's 23/24 Cadet Report sheds light on what motivates and concerns Gen Z seafarers and what the industry needs to do to retain and support them. It includes sections on diversity, retention, and mental health, revealing that while there are shared values around family, ethical treatment, social justice, and inclusivity, distinct regional identities are also influenced by social and cultural differences. Notably, 80% of cadets surveyed stated that how companies treat seafarers is the most crucial factor when choosing an employer, and 78% had not yet been to sea.

Additionally, Sailors' Society plans to publish a Snapshot Report later this year on the relationship between wellbeing and internet connectivity among seafarers.

PARTNERSHIPS

Sailors Society and Britannia P&I have maintained a strong relationship since 2017. Britannia has supported Sailors' Society's e-learning platform, providing comprehensive training programmes to over 15,000 seafarers. During the pandemic, the Club helped to mobilise resources to assist stranded seafarers on vessels. Britannia P&I is also sponsoring the upcoming South East Asia virtual cadet conference, building on the success of the previous three years.

In addition to Britannia, Sailors' Society has established relationships with maritime schools and government bodies in India. These partnerships include almost all naval schools in the country and have led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian government to provide extensive welfare support to seafarers.

As the maritime industry continues to evolve, Sailors' Society remains a committed advocate for the wellbeing of seafarers. With a strong legacy, innovative programmes and strong partnerships, the organisation is well equipped to navigate the challenges of the future. Seafarers worldwide can look to Sailors' Society for support, knowing their welfare is the priority.

24/7 HELPLINE

Sailors' Society offers help around the clock for seafarers and their families. It can provide support for everything from financial worries to mental health crises, and its trained responders speak several languages. It can be a support system wherever and whenever seafarers need it. Call +1 938 222 8181 or visit sailors-society.org/helpline and use the instant online chat.

MANAGING AND PREVENTING CHRONIC CONDITIONS AT SEA

BY **DR KATHERINE SINCLAIRE**, SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR, MEDSEA

HYPERTENSION

Approximately **46% OF ADULTS WITH HYPERTENSION ARE UNAWARE** that they have the condition

WHAT IS A CHRONIC DISEASE?

Many seafarers suffer with a chronic disease, an illness that typically lasts for an extended period, often throughout a person's life. There are many different types of chronic disease. Cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension and heart failure account for the largest disease burden resulting in 17.9 million deaths per year (WHO 2023), with other common diseases including cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes.

When onboard, seafarers need to appropriately manage any chronic diseases they suffer from, to ensure their overall health and wellbeing and to protect against the risks of their medical condition worsening at sea, where there may be limited access to medical care.

WHAT IS HYPERTENSION?

Hypertension occurs when the pressure exerted by circulating blood upon the walls of blood vessels is consistently too high.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

- An estimated 1.28 billion adults aged 30–79 years worldwide have hypertension
- Approximately 46% of adults with hypertension are unaware that they have the condition
- Only 21% of adults with hypertension have it under control.

It can be caused by a range of factors from diet to stress, genetics, age and lack of activity and when undiagnosed or incorrectly managed, hypertension can lead to serious and long-term medical consequences including:

- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Heart failure
- Peripheral arterial disease
- Aortic aneurysms
- Kidney disease
- Vascular dementia (due to reduced blood flow to the brain)

Given the risks, it is very important for all seafarers to appropriately manage their own health onboard as well as they can.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HYPERTENSIVE SEAFARERS

Take any prescribed medications. Bring an adequate medication supply for your contract duration and remember to take medication every day, as instructed by your doctor:

- Consider setting a daily alarm as a reminder, if you often forget to take medication.
- Remember, having a normal blood pressure does not mean you can stop taking medication, it means the medication is working.

Health and lifestyle: This should apply to all seafarers and is especially important in controlling high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases. It should include:

- Avoid tobacco: Smoking increases blood pressure and damages blood vessels.
- Eat a healthy diet: Limit sodium (salt) intake. Eat a diet high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Minimise saturated fats, cholesterol, and added sugars.
- Exercise regularly: Aim for at least 30 mins of moderate aerobic exercise most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight: Weight loss in overweight or obese people can significantly lower blood pressure.
- Limit alcohol intake: No more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women for people who choose to drink alcohol.

Check your blood pressure regularly (once a month or as instructed by your doctor): Tips for measuring blood pressure:

- Before: Avoid exercise, eating or taking medication. Do not drink caffeine or smoke for 30 minutes before. Empty your bladder and rest for five minutes.
- During: Sit quietly and do not talk while taking your reading. Have both feet placed flat on the ground and your back supported. Use a cuff that fits the top half of your arm properly (follow manufacturer guidelines for blood pressure machines). The cuff should be at the same level as the heart. Take 2 readings, 1-2 minutes apart.
- Assessing results:
  - Normal blood pressure: Less than 120/80 mm Hg
  - Elevated blood pressure: 120/80 to 129/79 mm Hg
  - Stage 1 hypertension: 130/80 to 139/89 mm Hg
  - Stage 2 hypertension: 140/90 mm Hg and above

IF HYPERTENSION WORSENS

Uncontrolled hypertension can result in life-threatening conditions such as heart attacks or strokes, or a condition known as a hypertensive emergency. Some warning signs of a hypertensive emergency include: chest pain, shortness of breath, severe headache, confusion, blurred vision, nausea and vomiting.

Do not delay reaching out to your telemedical provider (i.e. MedSea), If your blood pressure remains high, or you have any of the symptoms listed above, contact a medical professional at the onset as this will allow them to provide you with medical advice, support and mitigation strategies. Early contact is essential to prevent serious and long-term consequences.

PREVENTING AND TREATING

HYDRAULIC INJECTION INJURIES

HYDRAULIC INJECTION INJURIES POSE A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO ANYONE WORKING NEAR HIGH PRESSURE FLUIDS. INJURIES CAN OCCUR WHEN PRESSURISED FLUID PUNCTURES THE SKIN AND SPREADS BENEATH IT. INITIALLY, THE INJURY MAY SEEM MINOR, OFTEN COMPARED TO A BEE STING. HOWEVER, THIS CAN MASK THE SEVERITY OF THE INJURY, WHICH REQUIRES URGENT MEDICAL TREATMENT.

ANTHONY GARDNER,
LOSS PREVENTION MANAGER, BRITANNIA P&I

UNDERSTANDING HYDRAULIC INJECTION INJURIES

Although the risk of injury increases as the pressure of the fluid becomes higher, it is possible that pressures as low as 7 bar (approximately 100 psi) can puncture human skin.

Other factors that increase the risk of hydraulic injection through skin include:

- Physical proximity: The closer an individual is to the high-pressure fluid release, the greater the risk.
- Jet aperture size: Smaller apertures, like pressure nozzles or pinhole leaks, result in higher velocity fluid jets.

Common fluids involved in these injuries include:

- Hydraulic oil
- Fuel oil
- Water
- Grease
- Paint

These substances are used daily onboard ships and all have the potential to cause hydraulic injection injuries. These injuries not only cause direct tissue damage but can also lead to secondary infections. Depending on the type of fluid involved, they may also be toxic.

Typical shipboard medical equipment and training are insufficient for handling hydraulic injection injuries. It is estimated that permanent damage can occur within 6 hours of sustaining such an injury. The prognosis worsens as treatment is delayed, often leaving amputation of the affected areas as the only remaining solution.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The most common cause of exposure to pressurised fluid is equipment failure, such as burst hoses and failed couplings.

To minimise the risk of hydraulic injection injuries, consider the following preventative measures:

- Fit protective covers/devices where possible. These are usually in place as per design, but are occasionally removed and not replaced
- Regularly maintain the pressurised systems based on situational needs
- Label hydraulic hoses, maintain a register and establish replacement criteria, particularly for hoses exposed to the external environment
- Store hydraulic equipment, hoses and fittings appropriately between uses– for example, many come with storage cases.

The other common cause is human error. For example, pointing a pressurised lance at a person/self or using hands to feel for leaks.

To minimise human error, consider the following measures :

- Raise awareness of this injury type and provide reminders on safe practices when operating portable equipment
- Always wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE). It is important to note that high pressure fluid can penetrate many materials, so PPE should not be used to justify dangerous practices
- Never touch pressurised hydraulic hoses directly. Instead, use cardboard or similar materials held at a distance to detect leaks
- Ensure systems are depressurised and isolated before conducting any maintenance.

INJURIES

Major surgery was required to track and remove the injected hydraulic oil from the person's hand

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

If a hydraulic injection injury is suspected, seek immediate medical attention. Ideally the injured person should be sent to hospital ashore as soon as possible. When sending a person for medical treatment, provide as much detail about the injury as possible, including the time of injury, pressure exposure, and a safety data sheet of the injected fluid.

Practical medical treatment onboard is limited and is primarily first aid based. This includes controlling any bleeding, applying an ice pack to reduce swelling and pain at the wound site, and keeping the injured person calm. Avoid removing any fluid from the wound, as this could worsen the situation. Do not give the injured person any food or drink, as they may require general anaesthetic for urgent surgical procedures.

While hydraulic injection injuries are rare, their potential severity demands maximum caution when working near high-pressure fluids. Adhering to preventive measures and knowing how to respond can significantly reduce risks and improve outcomes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
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PROTECTING HEARING AT SEA:

ESSENTIAL MEASURES FOR SEAFARERS

SEAFARERS AND OTHER MARITIME PERSONNEL ARE FREQUENTLY EXPOSED TO HIGH NOISE LEVELS DUE TO THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK ONBOARD SHIPS. PROLONGED EXPOSURE CAN CAUSE HEARING DAMAGE, MANIFESTING AS HEARING LOSS, OR OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS TINNITUS.

The preferred method to reduce noise exposure is through limiting exposure and reducing the noise generated from machinery or activity. However, this is not always possible. When exposure to elevated noise levels is unavoidable, personal hearing protection should be used.

Hearing protection should be the last resort when no other reasonable measures can reduce noise exposure. Shipowners and operators need to identify high noise working spaces such as machinery space, cargo pump rooms, funnel exhaust rooms and steering gear rooms, as well as noisy work activities such as chipping/scaling on deck. Appropriate signage should be installed to warn personnel that they are entering a high noise area.

Noise levels above 80 dB(A)[1] require mitigation efforts, and hearing protection is mandatory at 85 dB(A) and above. The installation and use of temporary equipment can also increase noise levels. The effects of noise should be considered in onboard risk assessments and mitigated as necessary.

All hearing protection equipment must comply with approved standards. In Europe, for example, the most commonly adopted standard is EN 352. Factors to consider when choosing appropriate hearing protection include maximum noise level experienced, frequency of exposure, work activity, and even personal preference. Experience shows that uncomfortable PPE will not be worn as often as it should be.

The goal of hearing protection is to lower the noise levels experienced to 80 dB or below. Over-protection, reducing noise to 65–70 dB or lower, can be dangerous as it impairs the ability to hear communications and alarms, leading to the removal of protection and exposure to harmful noise levels.

The hearing protection selected will be rated to show the expected attenuation. Different regions have different classifications, for example the USA uses a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). Understanding the standard for the area of operation and ensuring compliance when purchasing protective devices is important.

HEARING DAMAGE CAN AFFECT PEOPLE OF ALL AGES. PROTECTING YOUR HEARING IS CRUCIAL AND PROPER USE OF HEARING PROTECTION IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO REDUCE THE RISK.

Recommendations for personnel include:

- Always wear the provided hearing protection in required areas. If hearing protection is removed, even for a short period of time, the overall protection provided is reduced considerably
- Before use, ensure the hearing protection is in good condition, free of unofficial modifications and clean. Report any damage or defect immediately
- Follow the instructions for proper use of the protection. For example, when inserting ear plugs, gently pull your outer ear backwards to better align the ear canal for more effective insertion
- Confirm that the hearing protection fits properly. Everyone is different, but many hearing protection devices are standardised, and mass produced. If the equipment is unsuitable, seek guidance from your ship's manager
- Keep your hearing protection clean and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Irreparable hearing damage can affect people of all ages. Protecting your hearing is crucial and proper use of hearing protection is an effective way to reduce the risk. The provision and wearing of hearing protection is one method of reducing the chances of hearing damage, if donned properly. Familiarise yourself with your hearing protection and don't hesitate to ask questions if you are unsure.

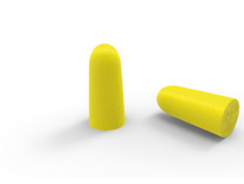
[1] DECIBELS, WITH A-WEIGHTING – USED TO MEASURE AVERAGE NOISE LEVELS. NOTE THAT DECIBELS ARE A LOGARITHMIC SCALE, WITH AN INCREASE OF 3 DB RESULTING IN A DOUBLING OF THE SOUND PRESSURE WITHIN THE EAR.

A SUITABLE RANGE OF HEARING PROTECTION SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PERSONNEL, INCLUDING:

Ear defenders or earmuffs: Cover the entire ear and can be helmet mounted or have a head/ neck band.

ADVANTAGES: Easy to use, comfortable in cold environments, flexible range of fits.

DISADVANTAGES: It can have poor compatibility with other PPE e.g. safety eyewear and can be bulky, heavy and uncomfortable in hot environments.



Ear plugs: Inserted into and blocking the ear canal, they can be disposable or reusable. Reusable types must be washed regularly.

ADVANTAGES: Compatible with other PPE, lightweight and easy to carry, comfortable in warm environments.

DISADVANTAGES: It can be easily misplaced, difficult to fit properly, cannot be used by someone suffering with an ear infection and may cause ear infections if hygiene is not maintained.

Semi-insert or canal caps: Cover the entrance to ear canal.

ADVANTAGES: These can be useful in work areas that are subject to infrequent high noise levels, where the swift application and then removal of ear protection is required.

DISADVANTAGES: They generally do not provide as much protection as the other types and are not as common in a shipboard environment.

ENHANCING BRIDGE VISIBILITY

JACOB DAMGAARD,
HEAD OF LOSS PREVENTION, BRITANNIA P&I

Bridge visibility, which refers to the unobstructed view the bridge team has from the bridge, is regulated by the SOLAS[1] convention. Good visibility is essential for safe navigation, collision avoidance, and effective decision-making. However, several factors influence bridge visibility, including the ship's design, the height and location of the bridge, and the arrangement of cargo or equipment on deck. These obstructions or blind spots can significantly impede the officer's ability to monitor the surroundings. Additionally, during navigational situations such as overtaking smaller vessels in narrow canals, visual contact can become limited when the smaller ships move along the hull of the overtaking ship in close proximity.

HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF BLIND SPOTS

COLREGs[2] emphasise the need for a lookout at all times, in all conditions, to ensure safe navigation. Maintaining a proper lookout requires vigilant monitoring of the ship's surroundings by utilising human senses and technological aids. To maintain a proper lookout, the bridge team must be familiar with any blind spots and understand how these affect their visibility and electronic instruments, such as the radar. To ensure an effective lookout, consider the following recommendations, though they are not exhaustive:

Use visual observations – Continuous visual scanning of the horizon and surrounding areas is crucial. Officers should use optical aids to enhance their range of vision.

Technological Aids – Radar, AIS and ECDIS are vital tools. These technologies can provide real-time data on nearby vessels, navigational hazards, and weather conditions, enhancing the officer's situational awareness. However, these instruments also have limitations and blind spots. The bridge team should be fully aware of these and take necessary actions to compensate for them. When permitted, docking radars should be in use both forward and aft. Additionally, new AI or augmented reality equipment may be installed to complement the required bridge equipment and help mitigate blind spots.

Keep moving – To overcome the limitations of visual and radar blind spots, the bridge team members must move around the bridge to maintain a complete view and comply with rule 5 of the COLREGs. When overtaking smaller vessels in narrow canals, blind spots can obscure the smaller ships from the bridge team's view. In such situations, the bridge team should visit the bridge wings to improve situational awareness. Additionally, before altering course, the bridge team should check the bridge wings to ensure there are no obstructions.

Modification and management of change – Consider any changes to the ship's layout. Installing new cargo cranes or wind rotors may impact visibility and should be taken into account. Seek approval from the flag state and classification society for these modifications.

Speed – Adjust speed accordingly as per COLREG rule 6 when passing restricted or dense traffic areas.

Training – Highlight the limitations of wheelhouse visibility as part of new watchkeepers' familiarisation. Continuous training, including simulation exercises, helps officers practice and improve their response to different scenarios.

Bridge Resource Management (BRM) – Effective BRM involves teamwork, communication, and the optimal use of all available resources. It ensures multiple crew members share the responsibility of maintaining a lookout, reducing the likelihood of human error.

Bridge visibility and maintaining a proper lookout are crucial elements of maritime safety. By combining visual observations, advanced technology, regular training, and effective communication, officers can enhance their situational awareness and ensure safe navigation.

[1] SAFETY OF LIVES AT SEA REGULATION V/22
[2] THE INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR PREVENTING COLLISIONS AT SEA

ADVICE FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT SEA

TODAY, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A VITAL TOOL FOR STAYING CONNECTED WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND THE WIDER WORLD. FOR SEAFARERS, WHO OFTEN SPEND LONG PERIODS AWAY FROM HOME, IT CAN BE A LIFELINE. HOWEVER, USING SOCIAL MEDIA ONBOARD A SHIP COMES WITH UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. BELOW ARE SOME ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SEAFARERS TO ENSURE THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA USE IS SAFE, EFFECTIVE AND RESPECTFUL.

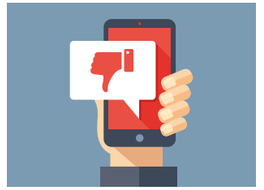
UNDERSTAND YOUR EMPLOYER'S SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET POLICY

Given the potential impact of social media use onboard, it is crucial for seafarers to understand and adhere to their employer's social media and internet policy. These policies are typically in place to protect both the company and its employees from the risks associated with inappropriate or unauthorised content sharing.

Additionally, employers may have guidelines regarding the use of social media during working hours or while on duty. It's important for seafarers to be mindful of these rules to avoid disciplinary action and to ensure they are focusing on their responsibilities. Awareness and adherence to these policies not only protect the company but also help maintain a professional image for the seafarers themselves.

TIPS FOR ADHERENCE:

1. **Familiarise yourself with policies:** Carefully read and understand the company's social media and internet usage guidelines
2. **Avoid sensitive content:** Refrain from posting images or information related to operations, colleagues, or company details that could be sensitive or confidential
3. **Respect work hours:** Limit social media use to personal time to ensure that it does not interfere with professional duties.



THE ISOLATION EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Onboard a ship, where the crew often works in close quarters, social media can inadvertently create a barrier between colleagues. Instead of engaging in face-to-face interactions, some seafarers may retreat into the digital world, focusing more on online connections than on building relationships with their fellow seafarers. This can lead to a fragmented crew dynamic, where individuals are physically present but socially disconnected. Such isolation can have negative implications for teamwork and the overall morale onboard.

TIPS TO COMBAT ISOLATION:

1. **Schedule offline time:** Set aside specific times for social media use and commit to engaging with colleagues during meals or downtime
2. **Participate in social activities:** Join in onboard activities to engage with other seafarers
3. **Share experiences:** Discuss online content or news with others to stimulate conversation and shared interests.

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONALISM ONLINE

While social media platforms are often used for personal expression, seafarers must remember that their online presence can reflect on their professional life. Posts, comments and photos shared online can be seen by colleagues, superiors, and even potential future employers. It's vital to maintain professionalism in these spaces to avoid damaging your reputation or career prospects.

TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALISM:

1. **Think before you post:** Consider the potential impact of your posts on your career and relationships. Avoid sharing controversial or negative comments about the company or industry
2. **Maintain privacy:** Adjust privacy settings to control who sees your posts and be mindful of the information shared online
3. **Be respectful and inclusive**: Consider the diverse backgrounds of colleagues when sharing content, avoiding posts that could be seen as offensive or insensitive.

ONLINE SECURITY

Seafarers also face unique challenges in maintaining online security. The maritime environment often involves using shared networks with limited security measures, making personal devices more vulnerable to cyber threats.

TIPS FOR ONLINE SECURITY:

1. **Use strong passwords:** Create unique passwords for each account and change them regularly
2. **Enable two-factor authentication:** This adds an extra layer of security, making it harder for unauthorised users to access your accounts
3. **Be wary of phishing scams:** Avoid clicking on suspicious links or downloading unknown attachments, as they may be phishing attempts or contain malware
4. **Keep software updated:** Regularly update your devices' software and apps to protect against the latest security threats.

Social media is a powerful tool for seafarers, offering a vital link to the outside world. By prioritising security, managing bandwidth, maintaining professionalism, staying safe, combating misinformation, and leveraging professional networks, you can enjoy the benefits of social media while minimising potential risks. Navigating the digital world wisely ensures that your social media experience is positive and enriching, enhancing your life onboard and beyond.

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