



International Organization
of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P)

Contact: Lisa Rosenthal
Tel: 410-691-8146
E-mail: lrosenthal@bridgedeck.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug, 27, 2019

MM&P Sponsors Study on Responsibility for Shipboard Safety

The International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, in conjunction with Dalhousie University of Halifax, Nova Scotia, has conducted a study on the complex issues underlying the topic of responsibility for shipboard safety.

The study describes: the maritime safety regulatory regime; a number of high-profile international maritime accidents; and commercial pressures on front line personal (ship's officers and crew), safety inspectors and management.

Among the contributors to the study, which was presented to the World Maritime Rescue Conference in Vancouver, Canada, were: professional mariners who had been scapegoated by their employers for urging that serious shipboard safety problems be addressed; and experts on international maritime law, the international regulatory regime and classification societies.

The study, "Spotlight: Why Accidents Are Often Not Accidental," focuses in large part on the safety implications of the commercial pressures that play out in national and international shipping markets.

On a domestic level, operators in all shipping markets are understandably reluctant to forgo income while a ship is pulled out of service to be repaired.

In international shipping, where the flag-of-convenience system dominates, owners are free to choose which flag state and class society to use. This results in commercial pressure on flag states and class societies, which may decide to turn a blind eye to safety problems as a way to attract and retain clients.

In this scenario, it is no surprise that ship's officers who bring safety issues to the attention of management are exposed to the risk of retaliation: as whistleblowers they may face punishment, demotion or even termination.

The study illustrates how these complex factors may have contributed to a number of highly publicized maritime accidents that involved significant loss of life or damage to the environment: the 2002 *Prestige* disaster; the sinking of the Russian riverboat *Bulgaria* in 2011 and of the Korean ferry *Sewol* in 2014; and the sinking of the bulk carrier *Stellar Daisy* in 2017.

The study is posted at: <https://bridgedeck.org/actionnetwork/Spotlight-MMP-WMRC-Final071619.pdf>.

#####

MM&P represents: licensed deck officers on U.S.-flag commercial vessels sailing offshore, on the inland waterways and on civilian-crewed ships in the government fleet; mariners who work on tug, ferry and harbor tour vessels in New York Harbor and throughout the Northeast; licensed and unlicensed mariners who work on dredges; state pilots; marine engineers; unlicensed seafarers; and maritime industry shore side clerical and service workers.

International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P), ILA/AFL-CIO
700 Maritime Blvd., Suite B, Linthicum, MD 21090-1953
410-850-8700/www.bridgedeck.org