

Surveyor's Notebook

Bridge Teamwork and Fog

Arriving or departing from port, and navigating in busy coastal sea lanes, are possibly the most dangerous parts of any voyage. This is especially true when rain or fog reduces visibility. In these conditions, the bridge team will really need to function as a unit and be on its toes.

When navigating in fog, it is likely that the watch officer on the bridge will be joined by the master, a lookout and a helmsman. The master may or may not take the con, but he will certainly be supervising events. In these circumstances, a good bridge team will have clear understanding of who is responsible for navigation and collision avoidance, and the necessary information flow between its members. There can be no room for misunderstandings, distraction or confusion. If the master takes the con, he should say so. If the master is watching a dangerous target, he should tell the watch officer and instruct him to monitor any other potentially dangerous or emerging targets, and to report them immediately. If the master is monitoring an alteration of course, he should instruct the watch officer to check the ship's progress and to plot positions on the chart.

There is no room for error when navigating in busy coastal waters in reduced visibility. Any misunderstanding on the bridge because of poor teamwork will almost certainly put the ship in danger, something that is easily avoided by following the principles of bridge team management.

Engine Room – Portable Pumps and Pipes

Ship's engineers almost always want to do something with the ship's equipment or systems that the ship's designers or builders did not think of. The most common activity is to pump fluid from one tank to another when the two tanks are not connected by fixed piping and the only way this can be done is with a portable pump and pipe. Typically, this becomes necessary when a tank needs cleaning or repair, or when a tank is being used for a purpose other than originally intended.

Surveyors who inspect ships for the Club often find portable pumps and pipes in the engine room. Usually, the pipes are dirty and oily because they have been used to transfer brown water into the bilge or into another sludge tank. There is nothing wrong in having such equipment, but problems can arise when Port State surveyors find the equipment and suspect it has been used for an illegal discharge of oily water into the sea.

The Club has suggested that flexible pipes and portable pumps should not be left lying in the steering flat or on the bottom plates, and that they be put away in a locked locker, with the chief engineer keeping the key. It is additionally recommended that, whenever these pipes or pumps are used, this is recorded in the Oil Record book.

This is to demonstrate control, because no one can open the locker without first asking the chief engineer for the key. Otherwise, how else could the ship convince a Port State surveyor that nobody used the equipment for an illegal discharge at three in the morning?

(Article extracted from The Standard Club's publication – Standard Bulletin)