► BULLETIN

Caution on the unauthorised and incorrect use of ECDIS

With the advent of technology, the use of Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) is getting increasingly popular. Whilst the use of an ECDIS does have its advantages, it can have a negative impact if not used correctly and this is known to be a causative factor in major claims such as collisions and groundings.

Due to the perceived cause of these incidents we would like to draw our Members' attention to *Regulation 19 of chapter V o*f the *Safety Of Life At Sea* (SOLAS) convention which permits an ECDIS to be carried as part of the on board navigational system, provided it meets the chart carriage requirements as detailed in regulation. The ECDIS must be type approved and in order to do so and it must meet the required performance standards (MSC.1/ Circ.1503, ECDIS – Guidance for good practice).

> Type approval is the certification process that ECDIS equipment must undergo before it can be considered as complying with IMO performance standards. The process is carried out by flag Administration-accredited type-approval organisations or marine classification societies in accordance with the relevant test standards.

It is important to remember that personnel operating the ECDIS must have undergone appropriate ECDIS training. It is understood that the ECDIS training and certification requirements, as per the 2010 Manila amendments to the STCW code will not be in force before 1st January 2017. The amendments to the STCW Convention via circular STCW.7/ Circ.18 - 22 May 2012 include a limitation on the STCW deck officer endorsement of the Certificate of Competency (COC). This renders the COC invalid for service onboard ECDIS equipped vessels in the event no evidence is available to demonstrate that a deck officer has undergone the required ECDIS training. It is therefore advised in the interim, that Members should ensure navigating officers on board their ships using ECDIS are trained to existing standards such as the IMO ECDIS model course (1.27).

Notwithstanding the statutory training mentioned above, Members should ensure that navigating officers are familiar with the specific ECDIS model available on board through a

familiarisation programme. As far as practicable, it is advantageous that the same make and model of ECDIS is installed on all fleet vessels to assist this familiarisation process. This would help to reduce the incorrect use of the ECDIS such as not including the correct layer of navigational data of the electronic chart and helping to ensure that all the data available on the corresponding paper chart is displayed on the ECDIS.

If paper charts are the primary means of navigation on board the vessel, then it is imperative that all navigation, including, but not limited to, chart work, passage planning and position fixing is carried out using the paper charts. The primary source of navigation, whether paper charts or an ECDIS, should be kept updated at all times in accordance with SOLAS Chapter V/27.

If a non type approved ECDIS is discovered fitted on board a vessel, it is strongly recommended that the ECDIS be decommissioned to stop unauthorised usage. The prohibited use of these systems must further be emphasised by displaying prominent notices upon the equipment to show it is not to be used for navigation. Such measures should also be included in the shipboard navigation procedures.

Further details on the requirements of ECDIS can be found on the IMO website following the link www.imo.org.

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