A Unique Approach

SafeShip associates have developed a unique, in-house pilotage risk assessment tool that, combined with their in-depth pilotage experience, can help qualify the various risks in pilotage waters.

With associates in Australia, the United Kingdom and North America, our team can arrange one or more SAFECON assessments when and where our clients feel the need. We can provide cost effective feedback that will help you assess risk while under pilotage and hence improve safety.

Vessel owners, operators and/or managers, port authorities and pilotage authorities can all benefit from the SAFECON assessment process. For more information, rates and conditions please go to http://safeship.ca/pilotage-waters-risk-assessments.html, or inquire at SAFECON@SafeShip.ca

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Each pilotage area is unique. And as different as each pilotage area can be one from the other, so too the individual pilots - not to mention the particular bridge team with which they are working or the vessel they are on.

Accident reports reveal that almost all human factor related accidents in pilotage waters are due to a breakdown in communication and team interaction.

Our approach is **not** to gauge the technical knowledge of a particular pilot. And the multifaceted interface (pilot, crew, vessel, port) makes one-size-fits-all judgements on risk in pilotage waters unsuitable.

In order to better target risk, **on-board pilotage risk assessments** (SAFECON©) have been developed by our team in order to qualify, among others:

- Bridge team/pilot interaction
- Bridge team pilotage procedures
- MPX documents
- Master/pilot exchange
- Vessel specific risk for pilotage waters
- Level of bridge team engagement
- Effectiveness of communication
- Risks associated with a particular pilotage area or port

SafeShip

Pilotage Waters Risk Assessment

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To improve safety for:

- Vessel Owners
- P&I Clubs
- Operators / Managers
- Pilotage Authorities &
- Port Authorities

Towards Greater Safety in Pilotage Waters

Context

Paradoxically, over time the classic act of piloting has both changed drastically yet fundamentally remained the same; the age of electronic aids and precise positioning systems has been a boon for situational awareness – but local quirks of navigation, traffic and language, to say nothing of being the eyes and ears of the coastal state, make the pilot's job as necessary as ever. But, notwithstanding the generally high standard of pilotage services worldwide, accidents continue to happen; improvements can still be made.

One of the principal weak points in the present pilotage paradigm is that of single point failure. In many cases, the act of piloting remains with the pilot – in his or her head. The pilot boards the vessel, exchanges basic verbal information with the Master and OOW, and then assumes the con. Without a comprehensive pilotage passage plan and detailed Master/Pilot Exchange (MPX) the bridge team are left guessing what the pilot's next move will be and, once taken, scrambling to validate if it is correct. This practice persists even today despite BRM training for ship's crew and pilots, a Canadian Transportation Safety Board recommendation for published pilotage plans, as well as an evolving industry best practice to the contrary. But sharing the plan is not exclusively for the pilot to give. If passage and berthing details are not forthcoming from the pilot, the Master and OOW should rightfully ask, but few do.

Additional Layer of Safety

Numerous accidents have been documented over the years with similar behavioral antecedents. Starting in the early 1980's, as accident investigation reports began to identify single point failure as an unsafe condition and contributing factor, BRM training for officers and pilots was thought to be the answer. Today it remains unclear, given this training and the lessons ostensibly learned, why this unsafe condition continues to endure. The momentum of the status quo (classic approach) is quite possibly a more formidable challenge than short, sporadic training can reverse; changing the pilotage culture, as much for crews as for pilots, is proving to be very difficult.

In a recent risk assessment for the Port of Halifax concerning ship/bridge contacts we can read the following;

"While stating that a lack of good BRM was a contributing factor for many of the ship/bridge contacts referenced in this assessment may be stating the obvious, what is less obvious are the actual practices and procedures (or lack thereof) that are nestled under the "cover" of the overarching BRM classification. Lack of proper communication, which itself is strongly linked to the lack of a common passage plan - that is, a common mental model of the passage and what the maneuver will be, which includes shared navigational cues and a shared situational awareness - these then are the unsafe conditions that allow single point failure on ships with a bridge team and are major contributors in a great many pilotage accidents."

In order to improve safety performance in pilotage services and reduce its vulnerability to single point failure and other weakness, an additional layer of safety should be sought.

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Vessel Owners/Operators, Managers, Port Authorities, Pilotage Authorities and individual Pilot Groups can all profit from the SAFCON assessment process.

Further Reading

For complimentary information and further reading on this topic please refer to the various articles below, published by our associates.

- The Pilotage Paradox, Seaways Magazine, September 2008
- The Pilotage Paradigm, Seaways Magazine, October 2009
- Pilotage Passage Plans – New Directions, Seaways Magazine, October 2010
- The Master-Pilot Exchange: A Study into this critical relationship, MSc dissertation, Capt. Richard Wild
- The Paradigm and the Paradox of Perfect Pilotage, The Journal of Navigation Vol 64, 2011
- A Document of Debatable Value – A Case Study Into The Use of Master-Pilot Exchange Documentation in Selected UK Ports, The Journal of Navigation, Vol. 66(03) 2013