

## Comments and Feedback

This page will include a collection of comments, feedback and discussion about the findings and conclusions of my research project and the attempt to move the debate forward via this website.

### Owners split over value of ISM Code

Tradewinds - 12.09.2003

One mystery tanker owner says the ISM Code is saving it millions.

Jim Mulrenan London

One tanker owner believes the International Safety Management (ISM) Code is saving him \$1m per ship per year.

But others fear ISM has cursed the industry with a mountain of paperwork that delivers little real benefit.

Five years after ISM came into force, loss-prevention guru Phil Anderson has completed a major survey of the impact of the code, earning himself a doctorate in the process. The North of England Protecting and Indemnity Association manager found little consensus and quite a few surprises as he probed shipowners' and seafarers' views on ISM.

Anderson found quite a lot of negativity in the traditional northern European shipping countries but more enthusiasm in areas like India and the Philippines. He suggests fewer than 10% of shipping companies are getting much out of ISM but those that have embraced the code enthusiastically are seeing safer ships and more efficient companies. The code is translated into bottom-line profit. "Companies that have done just enough to get a bit of paper have had to spend a lot of money but are getting little out of it," he told TradeWinds.

Although he is a former Bibby Line master mariner with a background similar to some of the ISM sceptics, Anderson is a firm believer in the benefits of the code and aims to spread the message through a 350-page tome to be published by the UK's Nautical Institute next month.

Anderson is critical of attempts by classification societies and a number of other organisations to sell ISM compliance packages and finds that it is necessary to develop an in-house system to get the full benefit

The Newcastle-based P&I executive says he has yet to come across an off-the-peg ISM template that really works. The process of developing a specialised in-house system takes you into the darkest corners of a company and helps identify problems, says Anderson.

Anderson persuaded some 3,000 masters and other seafarers as well as shipowners and managers to share their experience of ISM by promising strict anonymity. He is not naming the owner of the two-dozen vessel tanker fleet that reckons it is saving \$1m per ship per year.

But his book contains contributions from three master mariners who have made their mark on the ISM code.

According to Anderson, Sean Noonan has set up the best safety-management system he has seen. Stuart Nichols, a traditional British liner-company master, underwent a Damascene conversion to the benefits of ISM after moving into the offshore sector. John Wright has notably spread the safety-culture message as a trainer of seafarers.

Anderson says the scepticism about ISM he found among North Europeans may be age-related as much as cultural. There are still plenty of masters and senior officers from such backgrounds but almost all are over 50 with few younger replacements coming through the system.

The Indian respondents by contrast included masters and senior officers in their late twenties and thirties.

"It is part of human nature that people moving towards the end of their careers resent having something thrust on them and can be quite negative," Anderson adds.

The good thing from Anderson's point of view is that within a decade almost all the ships of the world will be manned by non-Europeans who are much more positive about ISM.

Capt Anderson, or maybe that should be Dr Anderson, is meanwhile set to pick up another title in the spring, when he will likely take over as president of the Nautical Institute, the UK master mariners' professional association.

### **Spirit of the code can be easily lost**

Tradewinds 17.10.2003

A three-year study into the ISM code by Dr Phil Anderson has left him optimistic about the code's potential.

The ISM code has had more than its fair share of critics condemning it as simply a paper exercise and a bureaucratic waste of time.

Ex-shipmaster Anderson believes his survey has proven that the right application of the code can bring efficient safety benefits. Even more encouraging for profit-minded shipowners, the code can also yield commercial advantages because correct application brings an entire ship operation under review.

He said: "The ISM code is possibly one of the best business investments a ship operator could ever make. It will also help make ships safer and seas cleaner along the way."

His findings, published in "Cracking the Code", suggest the success or failure of the ISM code largely boils down to the attitude with which it is applied.

As an anonymous correspondent wrote at Anderson's new website chat room at [www.ismcode.net](http://www.ismcode.net): "The ISM code is only effective if both the company and the ship's crews implement it with the spirit of improving safety standards. Too many are implementing the ISM to the bare minimum so they just comply with the minimum requirements to obtain certification. To implement the ISM code with only the goal of reaching certification does not improve anything."

Another worrying note is that top-ranking ship operators, who are not really in need of the code, are taking advantage of it the most. The lower-standard vessels operating under a flag of convenience, for whom the code was actually intended, may be less safe as a result of the imposition of the code.

As the correspondent said: "The better shipping companies have probably become better. The inferior companies have become worse."

### **ISM Code can offer 'real gains' finds study**

Lloyds List 16.10.2003

Proper implementation of ISMC is possibly the best investment that can be made, writes Michael Grey  
Section: News  
Release Date: Thursday October 16 2003

EVIDENCE that there can be real and substantial commercial gains from proper implementation of the International Safety Management Code has been revealed in a new Nautical Institute publication, launched this week at the International Maritime Organisation.

"Cracking the Code" reveals the results and conclusions of research undertaken by Philip Anderson of the North of England P&I Club, who sent 70,000 questionnaires about the ISM Code and its implementation to seafarers and shipping company personnel to discover how the new safety systems were being perceived.

Analysing some 3,000 completed questionnaires and some 800 detailed comments, the study showed many seafarers were highly critical of the paperwork burden that ISM had produced, and revealed much criticism of shore side attitudes.

However, 10% of the responses indicated real gains in safety, efficiency and profitability from well-run systems, and Dr Anderson has attempted to discover common factors among those who believed there had been a positive result from their ISM implementation.

The book he has written, with chapters from Captain Stuart Nicholls, Capt John Wright and Capt Sean Noonan; three experts who have their own supporting evidence, shows that large numbers of companies were concerned only with compliance, and often bought off-the-peg systems from third parties, which they then imposed on their crews.

Others attached a low priority to ISM implementation, offering no training and concerned only that the necessary documentation be produced.

Features which have resulted in successful implementation, notes Dr Anderson, include the involvement of ships' crews in the development of their own systems, continuity of ship staff, support for the concept from the very top of a company, and harmonious ship-shore relations.

"We are now saving \$1m per ship per year which we directly attribute to our ISM implementation," reported a leading national flag tanker owner.

Speaking at the launch of the book, the Nautical Institute president Capt Robbie Middleton said there could be no doubt that improvements were necessary in a global industry that remained the second most dangerous, with fatalities among seafarers amounting to some 2,500 per annum.

Describing the new book as containing "tough" messages, Capt Middleton said there was clearly much to be done to change attitudes about the code, and to address the problems revealed when supposedly fully compliant ships were found subsequently deficient in port state inspections.

Inadequate auditing, said the NI president, was "largely to blame" for these discrepancies, and he contrasted the attitudes which remained prevalent in the shipping industry with those in the "self-motivating" offshore industry, where there were "strong, well-trained safety committees and a pride culture".

It was, said Capt Middleton, "saddening" that there was a toleration of high levels of accident in the shipping industry" because liabilities are limited and there is compensation to hand "so solving the issue commercially".

He suggested, however, that the book clearly demonstrated the days of the irresponsible owner are numbered, with poorly performing owners being obliged to demonstrate the effectiveness of their safety management in court.

The book focuses on the case of the fire aboard the car carrier Eurasian Dream, which was deemed unseaworthy on account of its equipment, the competence of master and crew and the adequacy of the documentation, contrasting this case with that of the product tanker Torepo, which grounded in the Patagonian Channel, but which, on account of well-managed ISM systems, was deemed seaworthy by the court.

The aim of the book, said Dr Anderson, was to convince those who have inadequately implemented the code that proper implementation is "possibly one of the best business investments they could ever make".

Cracking the Code is available from the Nautical Institute at £35.00