

## Interim Report

The questionnaires were first distributed in April 2001 – by November 2001 nearly 3000 completed questionnaires had been returned along with about 600 detailed comments. Additional comments and questionnaires continued to arrive but a decision was taken to take stock and evaluate the data to hand. It became apparent that this was to be a major task – even from a cursory overview it was apparent that the responses were highlighting many problems that were being experienced but also throwing up some very pleasant surprises. The responses were starting to paint a complex and complicated picture that would require some considerable time to analyse and prepare fully considered findings and conclusions.

I did feel however that an interim report could be prepared to highlight some of the interesting issues that were coming to light – particularly with regard to apparent cultural variations of perception of ISM. That interim report – ‘Light at the end of the tunnel!’ was posted on the original website in February 2002. Whilst it has been superseded by the much more detailed report published as my Doctorial thesis and the book ‘Cracking the Code’ I did feel that it would still be of interest to maintain it on this site as an additional reference source.

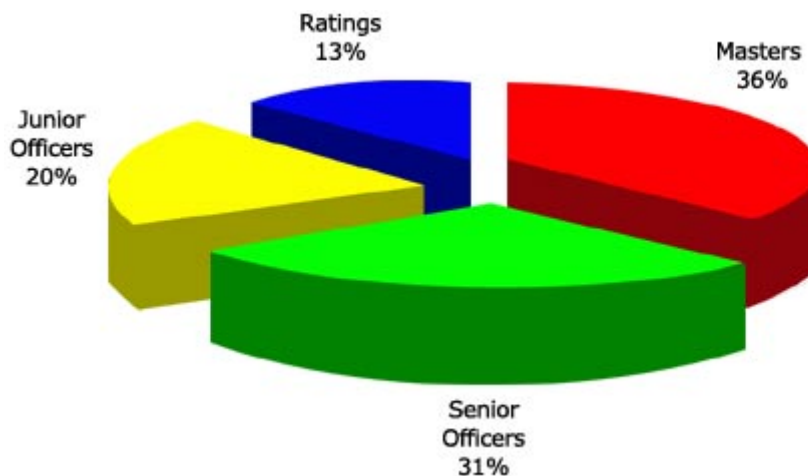
### The ISM Survey - An Interim Report

Light at the end of the tunnel!

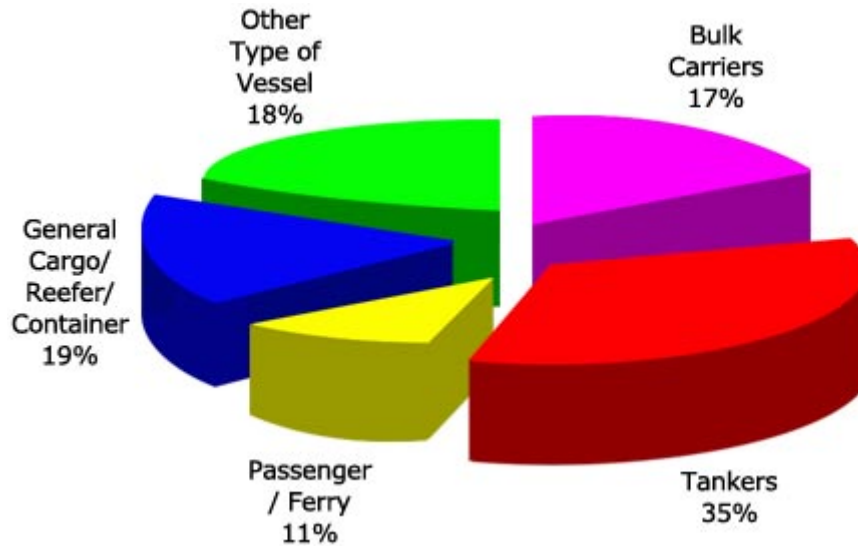
Firstly I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone who has returned completed questionnaires and extend my apologies for not being in a position to respond to each individually. Every single response has made a most valuable contribution to the survey.

By the end of November 2001 I had received nearly 3,000 completed questionnaires - as well as about 600 detailed additional comments. These are all extremely valuable but are taking a considerable amount of time to process and analyse. However, all the data is now entered in the Database and I am busy writing up the findings and conclusions.

### Who responded - Seafarers



### From which type of vessel - Seafarers



An initial analysis of the data and comments has been undertaken and I think two observations can be stated quite categorically:

1. The whole picture of ISM implementation is extremely complex;
2. The original question 'Is ISM working?' is far too simplistic and probably inappropriate at this point in time.

There are certainly some preliminary outcomes which were quite predictable but also some significant surprises - the full significance of some of the surprises is still to be fully considered and understood.

The first wave of questionnaires were dispatched in April, 2001 but by early Autumn the overall picture seems to be changing considerably. More than 70,000 questionnaires have been distributed to seafarers, ship operators and other stakeholders in the industry. In addition to the questionnaires distributed with Seaways, NUMAST also lent their valuable support and distributed 25,000 copies with the Telegraph - the IFSMA also kindly circulated copies to their members. There was also considerable press coverage with major editorials carried in the leading shipping newspapers and magazines as well as other professional and learned journals.

However, I was conscious that I needed to reach other seafarers who might not have ready access to these publications. By a stroke of good fortune and a little lateral thinking - a possible solution to that problem was identified. Canon Ken Peters who heads up the Mission to Seafarers, with Missions in many ports around the world, kindly agreed to lend their support. Another 26,000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and the Reverend Peters asked each of his Chaplains around the world to take the questionnaire with them when they visit ships in their ports and to encourage seafarers to complete the forms. Many of the Missions are also linked up to the World Wide Web which allows seafarers to complete the questionnaires on line at my dedicated Website. This Website ( <http://www.ismcode.net> ) had been set up with financial assistance from the North East Branch of the Nautical Institute and has become a focus for the research. Bundles of questionnaires were also sent to nearly 300 Nautical Training colleges and similar institutions around the world as well as to individual ship operators and other organisations who had agreed to help. What this meant however was that the first wave of responses received were primarily from British and Northern European respondents. The responses, in general, from this first wave were tending towards a somewhat ambivalent view but leaning towards a negative conclusion. There appeared to be various problems coming forward - certainly many felt that they were already managing safety very well already and did not want or need ISM, many were prepared to try but were becoming increasingly frustrated with the additional amount of paperwork and administration which had been created by the systems in their Companies and the limited resources available. However, that picture was to change considerably as the completed questionnaires started to arrive from seafarers of other cultures and traditions. Approaches were made to many sectors of the industry from Shipowners Associations, Flag State Administrations, Port State Control Authorities, Surveyors, P&I Clubs and Correspondents, Classification Societies and many other sectors. A wide net was cast and amazingly mixed haul was brought in! Support and words of encouragement have been received from many individuals and organisations. Practical assistance has been received from the Marine Society and the Nautical Institute which has helped towards the cost of printing and distributing the questionnaires.

As the big picture did start to come into focus I became increasingly convinced that the approach I had taken with the research was the most appropriate at this point in time. Perhaps understandably people like to see 'facts and figures', statistics which they feel provides them with firm evidence of the actual situation. I have certainly looked at statistical data from P&I Clubs and H&M Insurers to see how accident and claim trends

might have been moving up to July 1998 and through the phase one implementation date to the present. I have also looked at Port State detentions during this period and whilst some claims have been made in certain quarters I believe these statistics tell us very little at this point in time with regard to the success, or otherwise, of ISM implementation. I am coming to the conclusion that it is far too early for the full significance of ISM to be seen across a very large and diverse industry. There have been many other factors which are likely to have been influencing matters ranging from a whole array of initial teething problems, shifting market conditions, increasing vigilance of Classification Societies, STCW, the increasing and developing program of Port State Control and the increasingly litigious world in which we live.

My approach to the whole research project has been quite different; my aim has been to get inside of the implementation of the Safety Management Systems by soliciting the views and experiences of those at the 'sharp-end' - the sea staff themselves and the ship operators as well as external observers who are likely to have come into contact with the implementation process such as surveyors, insurers, Class Societies, Port State Inspectors and similar. In this way I hoped to identify how the implementation process was progressing, what problems were being experienced along the way and what lessons have been learnt and still need to be learnt. The responses received so far have provided an enormous amount of data and would suggest that my original intentions will be achieved. In many ways it looks as though those expectations will be well exceeded. However, the picture which is starting to come out is a most complex and varied portrait of a diverse industry. There are ship operating companies and individual seafarers for whom ISM is the greatest blessing ever bestowed upon the shipping industry - they tell me they are seeing efficiency and profits increase and claims reduced - which they directly link to their ISM implementation. At the other end of the scale there are certainly those who clearly feel that ISM is the greatest curse ever inflicted on the industry - many apparently believing some sort of conspiracy theory that the ship operators have used ISM as an excuse to shift all responsibility and liability from the office ashore onto the ship. In fact this is one of a number of very serious misunderstandings and misconceptions held about ISM - anyone who has read the Code can be left in little doubt that the responsibility is quite squarely on the shoulders of the Company with a big C!

The majority of the respondents fall between these extreme views and it is the purpose of the survey to try and understand why different individuals and Companies appear at different points on the compliance scale.

One thing is absolutely clear from a very significant number of respondents, particularly seafarers, that the systems they are working with are generating far too much paperwork, requiring much additional administration and the available resources on board are not adequate or sufficient to cope.

It is clear from the comments of many of these respondents that they were prepared to give ISM a chance but have been overwhelmed by the paper mountains. A number of individuals have used very similar language to allude to the same perceived consequence if something is not done to reduce the paperwork and administration - they are talking of the 'ISM accident' which is just waiting to happen. The perception is similar to the idea behind the 'radar assisted collision'. Seafarers tell me of the pressure, perceived or actual, which they are under to 'complete the paperwork' within the working hours limits under the ILO / STCW rules - such that they resort to filling in forms and writing reports on watch - at the expense of maintaining a proper lookout and attending to the navigation. Clearly this is not only a highly dangerous practice but has to be the ultimate irony as far as the whole philosophy of ISM is concerned!

It is clear from many of the comments of despair and disappointment that a significant number of Masters and other seafarers who perhaps started off with enthusiasm are now losing faith and concluding that ISM cannot work - that it has become a paper exercise without any obvious benefit. Clearly this is a very serious position to get to and we need to consider whether such a conclusion really is warranted.

Fortunately I think it is unwarranted - sadly many Companies, Masters and seafarers appear to be working in Safety Management Systems which are not functioning as they should.

Although the numbers are relatively small in the scale of things, there are a number of Ship Operators, Masters and seafarers who seem to have passed through the 'pain barrier' and now have the light at the end of the tunnel clearly in view and some have already reached the end of the tunnel.

They are describing systems where the paperwork and administration is now under control, there is full support and commitment from the Company ashore, profits are up and accidents are noticeably down.

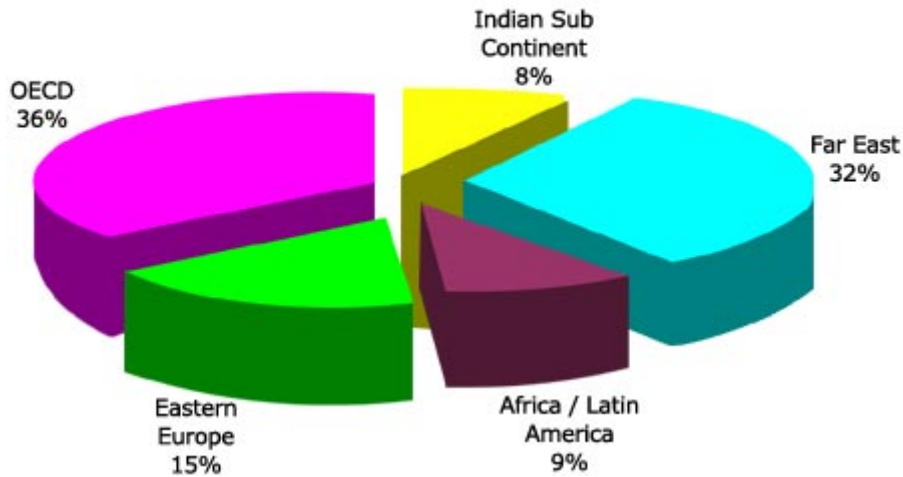
What this does demonstrate to me is that ISM can work - contrary to what some sceptics and cynics might have us believe. I think we need to look very carefully at what these Companies have done with their implementation, how they have overcome the paperwork and administration problems and how they have motivated their staff to persevere with the implementation and maintaining of their SMS.

One of the greatest surprises which is coming out of the survey has come about more by accident than by design. A few months ago the International Shipping Federation and BIMCO published the results of their latest survey in manning. Their results showed that 35% of seagoing officers are still from so called OECD countries with most of the remainder from the Indian Sub-Continent, South East Asia or Eastern Europe. I

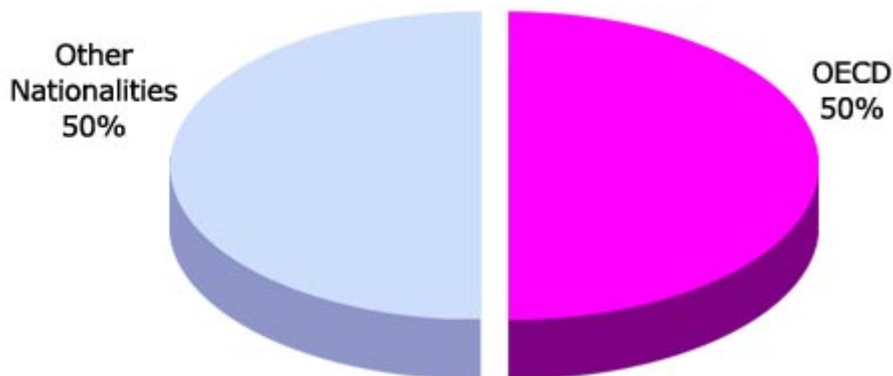
surprised to learn that 50% of the senior positions, Masters and Chief Engineers, are still held by OECD nationals. However, the report goes on to explain that almost all of these Masters and Chief Engineers are over 50 years of age without similar nationals following behind. This means that within a decade almost all the ships of the world will be commanded by nationals from the Indian Sub-Continent, South East Asia or Eastern Europe.

### ISF / BIMCO Study

#### Officers

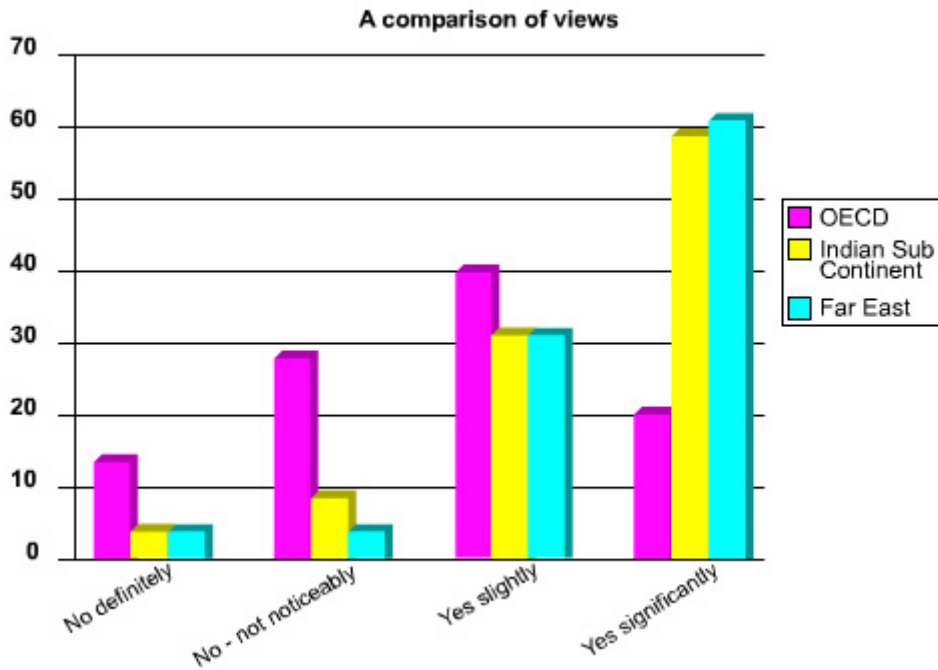


#### Current Position Re Masters and Chief Engineers

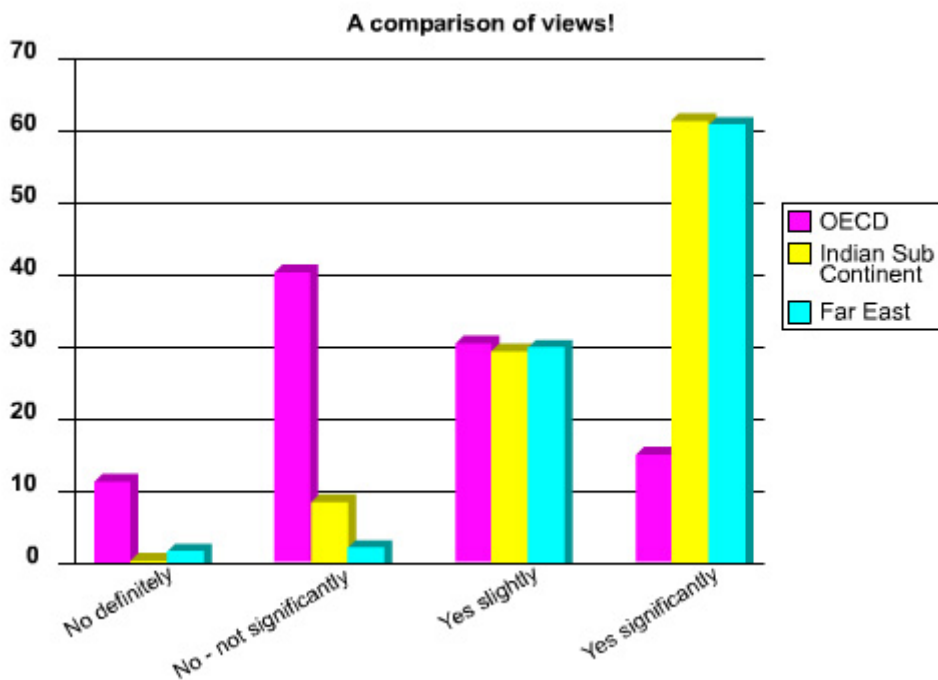


Fortunately I had asked respondents to state their nationality when completing the questionnaire. I was therefore able to separate out and compare the views and perceptions of ISM between the OECD nationals and those of other groups - what I am finding is quite staggering!

**Have incidents reduced since Phase One implementation?**



**Has ISM achieved its objectives?**



The OECD nationals are mainly holding the middle ground leaning towards a rather negative view of ISM, in general terms. However, when the views of the other nationalities are considered they are showing an enormous shift towards a very positive view of ISM. It is the enormity of the difference which is so surprising and potentially most interesting and possibly of considerable significance for the future success of ISM.

If these are the Masters and senior officers of the future in our industry - and if they are telling me the truth - then there would appear to be a very rosy future indeed for the ISM Code - provided the paperwork and administration problem can be overcome.

One of the major tasks for me now is to correctly interpret exactly what is being said with regard to ISM both from the OECD nationals and the Masters and officers of other nations. The indications are that we are here dealing with a significant cultural issue.

Many of the OECD Masters and officers perhaps perceive that they came from old established shipping companies or traditions where safety was already being well managed; ISM was not wanted, needed and has not contributed to increasing safety standards or reducing accidents. On the other hand it maybe the case that some of the non-OECD nationals have not come from such traditions and have found that the ISM Code provides them with a good and sound structure to manage safety and provides a valuable and useful tool.

Having informally discussed these findings with some British Masters and senior officers who have experience of sailing with other nationalities in various ranks many are telling me that they are not surprised at all by the positive responses - they explain that it is a 'cultural thing' whereby those officers telling me what they think I want to hear - not in the sense of not telling the truth but rather out of a sense of courtesy. Some suggest that it is because those officers possibly fear that I will tell the Company what answers they gave.

It maybe that in some cases these views have some merit - however I am not at all convinced that they provide a full explanation at all. Indeed I have spent some considerable time in recent years in contact with Indian Masters and officers and if the sort of views being expressed ever were correct and justified - I do not believe them to be so today. It is my intention to seek the views of Indian, Filipino and Eastern Europeans as to how they interpret the results. I will also be consulting industrial psychologists, intercultural experts and human resource professionals to try and clarify the situation.

The final conclusions of the research will be written up and published as a book by the Nautical Institute early in 2002 - details will be published on the Nautical Institute Website at <http://www.nautinst.org> .

At this point in time the interim conclusions are showing that there are some problems - particularly with the amount of paperwork and consequently upon moral - but there is also a considerable amount of positive support - particularly from the individuals who are likely to be the Masters and senior officers of the future. There is light at the end of the tunnel - we need to take a bearing on that light and, if necessary alter course and steer towards it!

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