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Press Release

Oil Companies Issue Recommendations on Seafarers' Work Hour Rules

The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF), whose members charter tankers and offshore support vessels, has published new 'Recommendations Relating to Requirements Governing Seafarers' Hours of Work and Rest' – <http://www.ocimf.com/Library/Information-Papers>

"Safety and environmental protection is our greatest priority and OCIMF members see fatigue as a significant contributory factor to many incidents that occur within the shipping industry" explained OCIMF Director, Captain David Cotterell.

" These recommendations set out our minimum expectations, which we hope that shipping companies will take into account to achieve compliance with IMO and ILO rules, prevent fatigue and reduce fatigue related incidents" David Cotterell added. "We also hope that our recommendations will be of benefit to the wider industry as well."

The Recommendations have been developed in co-operation with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Shipping Federation (ISF), who represent maritime employers during the negotiations at IMO and ILO on seafarers' work and rest hours.

OCIMF acknowledges that international legislation on working hours has been in place for some time, but suggests that these provisions have been subject to varying interpretations by individual administrations, resulting in differing requirements for vessels operating under different flags.

OCIMF believes that the new IMO and ILO regimes can make a difference, but to be effective, interpretations need to be replaced by clear, standardised requirements to ensure consistent enforcement to drive compliance.

The OCIMF Recommendations serve to highlight potential ambiguities and differing interpretations of the requirements of applicable international Conventions, including the 2010 Manila amendments to the IMO STCW Convention, which entered into force this year, and the 2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention applicable from August 2013.

As a consequence of the new international work/rest hour record regimes adopted by IMO and ILO, OCIMF expects that Port State Control procedures will pay increasing attention to ensuring compliance with the requirements.

Given the importance attached to ensuring the proper management and recording of seafarers' hours of work and rest, OCIMF recommends that purpose-developed computer software is used to manage seafarers work and rest hours on board ships, in order to demonstrate compliance with both IMO and ILO regulations and its own recommendations.

The OCIMF paper refers to the ISF Watchkeeper Version 3.3 computer software as being suitable for this purpose, incorporating calculations and the ability to generate reports that are consistent with the oil companies' recommendations.

ICS/ISF Secretary General, Peter Hinchliffe, remarked

"We are pleased that OCIMF discussed the development of their policy with ISF and ICS, in view of our close involvement as the official social partner which helped negotiate the ILO and IMO rest hour regulations on behalf of maritime employers."

"The Recommendations show that charterers, as well as governments, take the prevention of fatigue very seriously. We are pleased that OCIMF acknowledges the benefits of the ISF Watchkeeper program as a means of maintaining records that can demonstrate compliance with both international regulations and oil company requirements" added Mr Hinchliffe.

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