

sound knowledge of the interaction that occurs between ships in differing circumstances, and almost certainly will have had no experience directing and controlling tugs. Before taking up his role as an STS mooring master he will therefore require a training programme that essentially starts from scratch and need an extended period of peer training along with specialist simulator tuition."

The other source of recruitment is the experienced ship handler, such as a port pilot. These hands are likely, Mr Loffstadt says, "to have progressed into pilotage after a lengthy career on the ocean. Some may have experience only of dry cargo whilst others may be well versed in tanker operations. But if the latter have been ashore for some time it is unlikely that they hold a current DCE. From a ship-handling point of view, the conversion of such a candidate to STS operations will focus on building on existing knowledge and skills. Theoretical knowledge of cargo operations, particularly the safety aspects, can be learnt at college,



Training regimes are being assessed in the light of new regulations

and certificates earned. Many administrations, though, are reluctant to award a DCE unless this knowledge is then put to practical use in a watchkeeping role over extended periods at sea. The impracticability of such a requirement in this situation is quite clear."

To most vessel masters the most important quality for a mooring master is undoubtedly the ability to safely and efficiently berth and unberth

his vessel. "Once the mooring is complete most would agree that the primary function is to ensure that the vessels are working to a common transfer plan, that all parties are familiar with the plan, communications are effective and that all operations are carried out with due regard to safety and the protection of the environment in accordance with OCIMF and ISGOTT as appropriate" says Mr Loffstadt. "In these circumstances it is questionable whether a cargo endorsement on the mooring master's certificate of competency is a necessity or merely an advantage."

Ultimately the future development of first-class training will remain in the care of leading STS service providers, says Mr Loffstadt. "Within Fendercare Marine we already have plans to take a totally fresh look at training. This may well involve getting together with other significant players and, as many of our STS superintendents/mooring masters hold British Class 1 certificates, possibly liaising with the Maritime Coastguard Agency." Simulator-based training will continue

Online option proves useful for the smaller operator

The advent of the new STS regulations places a new onus on vessel operators to document their processes. This has given rise to a range of online services to help operators assess the risks involved in a particular ship-to-ship transfer.

Ionia Ship Management operates a fleet of 10 oil tankers with an average age of six years. They work with a range of major oil companies including Exxon, BP, Chevron and Total. Ionia safety and quality manager Krystyna Tsochas says that its vessels are "involved with a number of STS operations throughout the year. We identified the need to develop a process in order to screen the vessels that are nominated to carry out STS operations with our vessels. Then we identified the need to be able to carry out effective assessment of those vessels that are nominated. We realised that we did not have adequate resources to make informed decisions when evaluating those vessels, which led us to enrol with onlineSTS.net in April 2011."

When Ionia receives a charterer's nomination of a vessel to carry out an STS transfer with one of its own vessels, the company forwards the information to Dynamarine's onlineSTS.net service. This generates a screening and risk assessment report. "We evaluate this report and decide if we are able to approve the nominated vessel," says Ms Tsochas. "We then forward the information to our master to ensure he is aware of the risks he may encounter during the STS operation." Once the STS operation

is complete, the master reports back with an assessment of the participating vessel, the STS service provider and the POAC. All of this information is passed to onlineSTS.net and uploaded to their database. "This is a reliable way to establish and monitor our key performance indicators, and to collect performance records. It also provides us with impartial, third-party assessment of the performance of our own vessels."

Prior to the passing of the new IMO resolution, Ionia had STS operations procedures based on OCIMF guidelines. "Once the IMO resolution was ratified, we equipped our vessels

with STS plans that include policies addressing the operational as well as the due diligence procedures that might be audited or vetted by third parties. The implementation of these procedures has provided us with documented evidence – we retain those documents on board for five years, and they can easily be vetted by any third party. This means we have a way to show that we provide quality-assured services and risk-free STS operations to our customers. We were audited earlier this year during a TMSA review by Exxon Mobil, and we received very positive feedback regarding this service."



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