MARITIME AND PORT AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

SHIPPING ADVISORY
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For the attention of: Shipowners, ship managers, operators, masters and crew of Singapore-registered ships.

Preventing Personal Electronic Devices Distraction During Navigational Watchkeeping

Drawing lessons from marine casualty investigations conducted by maritime safety investigation authorities, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) reminds shipowners, ship managers, operators, masters and bridge watchkeeping personnel of the navigational safety risks associated with the inappropriate use of mobile phones and other personal electronic devices during navigational watches and safety-critical operations.

Lessons from Marine Casualty Investigations

2 The maritime safety investigation authorities have highlighted the navigational safety risks associated with mobile phone / device distractions. The following cases provide valuable lessons for the maritime industry:

a. Grounding of Priscilla (2018): The United Kingdom Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) found that the Officer of the Watch (OOW) was distracted by watching videos on his mobile phone and failed to adequately monitor the vessel's progress, resulting in its grounding. The investigation also identified deficiencies in bridge watchkeeping arrangements and the use of navigational safety systems (MAIB Investigation Report).

b. Collision involving Yangze 7 and Miss Peggy (2024): The United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that the pilot directing Yangze 7 was distracted by prolonged non-operational mobile phone use. The bridge team's failure to challenge the pilot's behaviour also highlighted weaknesses in Bridge Resource Management (BRM). The collision resulted in one fatality (NTSB Investigation Report).

3 These investigations revealed the importance of maintaining a proper lookout, situational awareness and effective BRM, as well as minimising distractions during navigational watches and other safety-critical operations.

Recommended Safety Measures

4 MPA encourages shipowners, ship managers and masters to:

a. Establish clear procedures within the ship's Safety Management System (SMS), if applicable, to prohibit non-operational use of mobile phones and personal electronic devices during navigational watches and other safety-critical operations.
b. Ensure bridge watchkeeping personnel remain focused on navigational duties, maintain a proper lookout and effectively utilise navigational safety systems.
c. Reinforce effective BRM by encouraging bridge team members to promptly raise concerns about unsafe practices, including inappropriate mobile phone use by any person involved in navigation, including pilots.
d. Communicate and reinforce these procedures through onboard safety briefings, training and periodic compliance checks.

Action Required

5 Shipowners, ship managers and masters are urged to take appropriate measures to minimise distractions and promote a safety-conscious bridge watchkeeping culture.

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Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore