

## Number 1 – October 2009

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### **New offer**

NEWS IN BRIEF is a fresh offer from the Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association. This monthly newsletter will give a summary of the most recent activities in our association and news of interest to English speaking members and seafarers on Norwegian ships. NEWS IN BRIEF will be distributed by e-mail as well as posted on our website [www.sjooff.no](http://www.sjooff.no). To subscribe, please e-mail [oslo@sjooff.no](mailto:oslo@sjooff.no)

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### **Crew changes at sea**

In a survey of shipowners, 45 per cent of the respondents state that they perform crew changes at sea. The Norwegian Maritime Directorate is of the opinion that the current regulations safeguard the safety of personnel. The Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association (NMOA) disagrees profoundly and is calling for the practice to be prohibited.

To date this year, the Directorate has registered 71 breaches of the rules governing hours of rest. Four of these breaches have resulted in fines.

"Fines for breaches of the new Ship Safety and Security Act can be very high. It is important that our members follow the rules down to the finest detail so that they – as the shipowners' representatives - don't play a part in undermining the regulations," says NMOA's Director, Captain Hans Sande.

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### **Seafarers are being criminalised**

The captain and mate of "Full City", which ran aground in Langesund this summer, have been charged with environmental offences, charges which carry potential prison sentences of 10 years.

"The NMOA is totally opposed to the application of this law, which serves to criminalise seafarers who are simply performing their duties," says Head of Department Bjørn Haave. In his view, this case is reminiscent of similar cases in other countries where accidents/incidents have been used in order to punish seafarers for actions that to a large extent make up part of the risk associated with practising the profession.

It is also worth noting that the shipowner has not been charged. This suggests that the authorities have insufficient insight into the maritime regulations.

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### **The IMO discusses rest hours**

Norway's views on rest hours did not prevail at the recent IMO meeting in London. The Norwegian proposal is that even in exceptional circumstances no fewer than 10 hours of rest must be taken every day.

"As a result of the proposal by the International Federation of Shipmaster's Associations (IFSMA) the European Union's proposal was not adopted. Yet again, the matter was postponed," says Bjørn Haave. He adds that the European Union, which has tabled the controversial proposal under which seafarers could risk having to work for 98 hours without interruption, will have to explain and expand upon its views.

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### **The popularity of maritime training**

A total of 1 311 people are now taking maritime studies at Norwegian colleges and technical schools. The corresponding figure one year ago was 1 239 students. This represents an increase of 13.9 per cent. This year, 1 028 students are taking navigational training – an increase of 6.4 per cent.

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### **More accidents**

Norwegian ships were involved in more accidents during the first 6 months of the year 2009 compared to the same period last year. A total of 98 ships were involved in accidents – a majority of which crashed into the quay. Foreign ships were involved in slightly fewer accidents in Norway the first half of the year.

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### **Nordic action week**

The ITF Nordic week of action (21 to 25 September) closed with a total of 258 ship visits made across the 10 participating countries. Multinational teams of seafarers, dockers, ITF workers and trade union volunteers carried out the inspections in ports across Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

ITF Maritime Coordinator Steve Cotton commented: "With current conditions it's never been more important to ensure that seafarers are receiving the wages they need and conditions they deserve. Across the region teams have been working without stopping to make sure that wherever humanly possible that's what happens."

He continued: "What has also been particularly successful is the cross-sectoral reach of this event, with seafarers meeting with dockers, with teams talking to the public and to companies, and with colleagues from different nations visiting and working together in countries right across the region."

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### **Increased piracy off Cameroon**

An increase in piracy off the coast of Cameroon has been witnessed in recent weeks.

Several ships have been attacked whilst operating within a few miles of Douala, with tens of armed attackers approaching commercial vessels in speedboats.

There is a particular risk of injury and death by small arms fire during such attacks. Personnel are advised to exercise vigilance, and note that the modus operandi of groups operating in the Niger Delta is increasingly being copied by similar criminal gangs around the wider coast of the Gulf of Guinea.

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### **First hijacking in three months**

Spanish tuna trawler ALAKRANA with a crew of 36 (16 Spaniards) was hijacked on 2 October, the first hijacking in some three months. The vessel owner has ordered its fleet of 17 trawlers to abandon Somali waters.

Spanish navy vessel CANARIAS arrested two "pirates" on 4 October alleged to be involved in the hijacking. A navy helicopter intercepted a skiff in which the two persons were trying to make their way ashore from ALAKRANA, at the time anchored some 135 nautical miles off the Somali coast.

ALAKRANA was also attacked, unsuccessfully, by pirates on 4 September.

The hijacking itself took place some 400 miles off the coast. Gulf of Aden has seen no hijackings and eight failed attacks since 1 September.