

Proper Manning of Vessels and Seaworthiness

Manning briefly refers to the provision of minimum number of crew members required for ensuring safe operation of the vessel according to technical, administrative and legal requirements. The number of crew members required to be have on board varies depending on the type, equipped technology, voyage field of the vessel and competency of the crew. For the sake of both the vessel and cargo together with the seaman, trainings obtained and experience constitute great importance together with the seaman license during the recruitment. In marine terminology, seaworthiness refers to as follows;

“A seaworthy vessel is the one that has been treated in terms of condition, equipment, sufficient manning and health in a manner that it can withstand hazards of sea.”



It is stated in data published by Accident and Investigation Board of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Maritime and Communication, the number of vessels that sank in years 2015 and 2016 was 6. According to the statistics of the same board covering the last 7 years (between 2010 and 2016), the number of incidents reported is 938. When the causes of the accidents are investigated, it was seen that mostly due to the physiological-psychological status, training and competencies of seamen. When global statistics are checked, 90% of collision incidents and 75% of fire and explosion incidents are caused by crew members. Although no one desires even a small accident takes place or causing the same, accidents continue to take place sometimes because of operational weaknesses and crew failures in some cases.

It is understood from the incidents taking place that degrees on the licenses are considered rather than the experience in recruiting seamen especially for small-scale ship-owners and that drills that must be performed periodically on board, are performed in theory rather than practice and no necessary diligence is shown for the training even in this era, when it is easy to access technology and information. Many incidents, where seamen got panic and abandoned the vessel or put themselves into danger asserting the problems originating from operation even in case of a small hazard because of their inexperience



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although they could secure the vessel and crew with basic actions, have taken place. The ship operators and owners must ensure that seamen have sufficient and suitable training and have sufficient experience while onboard. It must not be forgotten that the master is responsible from all these people. An experienced able seaman can be preferred instead of more than one young inexperienced seaman. We recommend ship-owners not assign any seaman and even cadet not holding a certificate and sufficient training on board.

When assessing the accidents that took place, P&I insurers perform sensitive examinations on the competencies and qualifications of the crew member regarding the manning of the vessels. If necessary diligence is not shown by the ship-owners, they may face with the risk that the insurance coverage is suspended as this endangers the “seaworthiness” of the vessel. Regarding to this, article 15 of the special conditions of our company on “Classification and Condition” states that:

15.1. Unless otherwise is agreed by the insurer, following conditions shall constitute insurance terms and conditions applicable for each and every ship:

(5) The insured must comply with all statutory requirements of ship’s flag state relating to the construction, adaptation, condition, fitment, equipment, manning and operation of the ship and must at all times maintain the validity of such policy as are required or issued by or on behalf of the ship’s flag state, including those in respect of the ISM and ISPS codes.

15.2 Unless and to the extent the insurer otherwise decides, an assured is not entitled to any recovery in respect of any liabilities arising during a period when any of the conditions in rule 15.1 have not been complied with.

Ship-owners shall be liable for the accidents to

be caused by the vessels, which become unseaworthy due to the failure of the ship-owners to provide the vessel with the crew members who have sufficient competency and experience.

Although it is known which risks will be encountered, which trainings will be taken against these risks and which procedures will be applied, the number of incidents not decreasing still, is a sign of the lack of adoption of a safe working culture and the inadequacy of implementation. Many ship-owners have adopted a safe working culture and have been pioneers in the marine industry. We wish that the number of ship-owners, showing necessary care and holding technical equipment, increases in time.

