

# Chart Updating

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Safety of navigation is essential for the protection of lives and the environment. This is the basic premise of the United Nations (1974) proclamation entitled SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea). Shipping accidents, groundings and collisions will be minimised by the new regulation recently approved by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the United Nations International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Incidents will be greatly reduced thanks to the regulation, making mandatory the use of electronic navigation charts (ENC) and equipment needed to display this and other pertinent information in an ECDIS (Electronic Chart Display and Information System). This month we fill you in on the details of quality assurance and quality control during the compilation and creation of ENCs. Few charting processes are as exacting as those involved in assuring that all data displayed is complete and faultless in every detail. Much as in the creation of the paper chart, high levels of accuracy and completeness are required. The feature on page 13 guides you through the complex life-cycle of an ENC.

Unfortunately, navigation and nautical charting does sometimes go awry and lead to shipping accidents. This month we include two relevant tales of grounding, each offering lessons to be learnt. One dates back to 1979, the other is more recent, from 2004. The first, the grounding of the *M/V Star Opal* in Canadian coastal waters, had nothing to do with a lack of modern ENCs and ECDIS equipment. The author describes how it was caused by basic human error, incorrect placement of navigational aids and a failure to update inaccurate or incomplete lead-line surveys. The Canadian coastal pilot involved should have been aware of the dangerous shoal published in a notice to mariners and disseminated to the maritime community. He was, however, unaware of this, and thus negligent, as was the captain and his shipping agent. And the Canadian coast guard, who had not changed the buoyage in the channel. In the case of the grounding of the *M/V Rocknes* in Norwegian coastal waters, the big question is whether it was due to navigational error or out-of date charts. An immediate investigation by the Norwegian Coastal Administration cleared the pilots of responsibility. However, financial claims led to the 'Rocknes' case being reopened last February. At the time of going to press, a verdict had not yet been passed. It is expected in mid-March.

Without wanting to spoil your read, and not yet knowing the outcome of the 'Rocknes' case, I do want to emphasise the differences between these two stories. Whereas the Canadian Hydrographic Service had good fortune on its side, the Norwegian Hydrographic Service may not be so lucky. The heavily used channel in Canadian waters had been resurveyed after fifty-five long years, finding a shoal just 150 days prior to the accident. The Canadian Hydrographic Service missed being found guilty of negligence by a few months! In the Norwegian case, the police in the aftermath of the accident placed blame on the Norwegian Hydrographic Service for failing to include the newly found shoal in its nautical publications. Read and judge for yourself. We hope to bring you the outcome in the 'Rocknes' case in our next issue.