

Call to Clear Licensing Confusion



Transas Marine has called for chart distributors to unify their message to consumers ahead of the Nor-Shipping 2009 exhibition in Norway. The company, whose own data service; Transas Admiralty Data Service (TADS) has been developed in partnership with the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, believes that the industry must now take the opportunity to remove any confusion surrounding the licensing of official and unofficial data.

Peter Mantel, Deputy Managing Director for Transas commented that customers are quite unsure about how the licensing of chart data works. Customers believe that licensing periods for official data are far more flexible than they actually are.

Government Hydrographic Offices which control the sale of official data have fixed licensing periods of 3, 6, 9 and 12 months. Navigating using official data incurs a minimum 3 month fee, but the data is comprehensive, official and fully-compliant for use in ECDIS. Chart Distributors are coming up with some very innovative solutions but all of them, Transas included, are operating within the same set of rules and regulations - Official data has fixed license periods.

With the carriage requirement for ECDIS due in 2012, ship-owners are opting for data suppliers which offer a compliant turnkey solution to their navigation needs. To comply with the IMO carriage requirement for ECDIS, all vessels must sail on official ENC charts. Where ENC coverage is not available, unofficial data can be used along with the appropriate paper charts in ECS mode and as an 'aid to navigation'.

Clipper Group with its modern fleet including handymax and panamax bulkcarriers, chemical tankers and VLCC's, was looking for such a solution and during the last 6 months has installed TADS across its fleet. TADS consists of official ENC data in both (S)ENC and standard ENC format. In addition to this Transas unofficial TX-97 data is available for the preliminary planning and purchase of charts. The intention being that it allows the crew to look in detail at which ENCs they will need to purchase to complete their final voyage plan.

Soren Andersen of Clipper Group was impressed with TADS as it suits their needs and the support services are very dependable. 'However, understanding what is needed in order to comply with rules and regulations can be confusing. Transas has taken us through the whole process and more importantly been very clear about issues such as chart ordering and licensing periods.'

Transas now hopes to widen the debate on chart licensing in order to make the solutions clearer for customers using the electronic services worldwide and to work together to see if there is any way that consumers will benefit from a more standardised presentation of license periods. This could potentially clear up confusion and allow all distributors the opportunity to show the unique benefits of the packages they provide.