

Crew Needs ECDIS Training to Avoid Detentions



The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has called for ship owners, operators and managers to exercise greater vigilance in order to tackle the rise in ECDIS-related detentions and the risks to safety at sea. The consequences of ECDIS deficiencies during inspections were highlighted in the recent case of a ship detained in Brisbane by AMSA due to a lack of on-board familiarisation training in the use of ECDIS.

This required an ECDIS trainer to be flown in from Singapore to train the crew. The vessel, which had passed through the Great Barrier Reef on its journey, was released from detention upon completion of this crew training.

With a growing majority of the global fleet having completed the switch to digital navigation, evidence is emerging that the number of ECDIS-related issues during inspections and audits is on the rise. Earlier this year, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) reported a significant increase in the number of ships detained because of ECDIS deficiencies.

Further-going Responsibilities

Speaking at SMM 2016 in Hamburg, Thomas Mellor, Head of OEM Technical Support and Digital Standards at UKHO, said that ECDIS can deliver benefits for safe, compliant and efficient navigation. However, once installed ship owners, operators and managers must fulfil their responsibilities for its ongoing use, including compliance with all relevant regulations. This includes

- updating the bridge procedures
- upgrading their ECDIS software to the latest IHO ENC standards and
- ensuring that bridge teams are trained and certified in the operation of ECDIS and in line with the requirements of Port State Control inspections and audits.

He also observes that there can be any number of reasons for non-compliance, like

- inadequate detail in the ship's Safety Management System (SMS);
- failure to use the latest Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) for the voyage plan;
- a bridge team unfamiliar with the use of ECDIS.

Whatever the reason, the penalties can be severe, whether through the costs of a delayed onward voyage or the impact on an owner's reputation of a failed SIRE inspection. Most importantly, every incident of non-compliance is a potential threat to the safety of that ship and its crew, as well as other traffic and the marine environment.

There is guidance and support available for owners from ECDIS manufacturers and ECDIS training providers. The UKHO has been freely distributing the ADMIRALTY Guide to Audits and Inspections at ECDIS Seminars for several years.