

conferences

Nautical Institute British Columbia Branch

Fourth Annual Safety and Environment Seminar

Captain J K Steele MNI

Once again, thanks to the tireless efforts of Captain Andy Patterson MNI and Captain John Lewis MNI, the BC Branch held its annual gathering to review issues concerning safety and the environment. The Branch Chairman, Captain Stan Bowles FNI, opened the seminar, welcoming some 50 members and guests. He reminded everyone that the introduction of new technologies, new regulatory requirements and new security issues all have the potential to override safety if we are not careful in how we manage them. The 'lock everything down' approach can be counterproductive sometimes and it is essential to apply careful thought before introducing new procedures and policies. The principle that safety is at the core of any operation, large or small must be borne in mind at all times.

The seminar led off with a presentation by Mr Paul Debenham of Princess Cruise Lines on how the company tackled the immense task of handling emergencies in the new generation of cruise ships. The movement in the 1990's from medium-sized cruise ships to the truly large ones of 100,000 tonnes and more necessitated a radical new approach of on-board safety systems. These needed to integrate all the emergency sub-systems for fire, watertight integrity, ventilation, shutdown and passenger control.

By resisting the temptation to let equipment drive the process, he and his colleagues developed a clear statement of requirement which the Italian company, Martec, converted into a safety management system, using a standard man-

machine interface for displaying the status of all emergency systems. Mr Debenham showed examples of computer screens as they would appear in the central control which gave a remarkable picture of every safety system in the ship to any level of detail required.

Lest the coordinator is overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information, the system prompts certain steps automatically, based on pre-planned actions. All this is backed up by closed-circuit television in numerous locations. A symbol for an emergency response team can be dragged on to the screen and placed exactly where they have reported in, an enormous help for whoever is controlling the ship's overall response to the emergency. In concluding, Mr Debenham said that this system permits monitoring by the shore office once a link has been established, in order to obviate the need to bother the master with questions at a time when he is fully seized with the emergency at hand.

Closer to home for the next item, the seminar heard a briefing from one of the Branch members on the Canadian Coast Guard Pacific Region Operational Services. Captain David Snider MNI, who has recently come ashore from command to be the Superintendent Fleet Standards and inspection/designated person ashore for the CCG Pacific Region, provided a detailed and highly informative overview of the operations of the region, the second largest in Canada, with 15,000 miles of coastline, 2,000 aids to navigation, 27 staffed light stations, two Loran stations and four GPS sites.

Speaking to the theme of the seminar, Captain Snider pointed out that in its search and rescue role, the Pacific Region deals with some 2,000 marine incidents annually. This is in the context of some 250,000 pleasure craft, 6,000 fishing vessels and 3,000 merchant vessels in British Columbia



▲ Captain Martin Scott FNI presents Captain David Snider MNI with his commendation certificate

waters. This is no small task, obviously, and the 1,100 volunteers and 232 boats of the Canadian Coastguard Auxiliary are vital assets in assisting the regular CCG fleet in carrying out this responsibility. Captain Snider forecast that the next few years will need to see some fleet replacement plans initiated. Everyone who operates a fleet of ships for any reason knows that the tendency to keep on running ships until rust-out for financial reasons results in higher overall costs and serious decreases in reliability. The level of interest in this matter was reflected in the many questions about the future put to Captain Snider from the floor.

The Chairman then introduced Captain Martin Scott FNI, former President of the Nautical Institute, who had very kindly arranged his itinerary in the area to include our seminar and who presented the certificate of commendation for the 2003 Shipmaster of the Year award to Captain David Snider CCG, MNI on behalf of Lloyd's List and The Nautical Institute.

■ Other subjects covered in this seminar, including marine air emissions and lifeboat mechanism problems, will be featured in future issues of *Seaways*.