

Making reporting happen

Seeking ambassadors to promote the reporting of accidents and hazardous incidents

Paul Drouin AFNI, Editor, MARS

John Rose FNI, Director, CHIRP Maritime

Recently, the CHIRP Director (Maritime) and the Editor of MARS have shared the same concern at the decline in the number of reports they receive. They are keen to reverse this trend and have considered various ways to address the concern. As a result of this review, there is now an opportunity for members of The Nautical Institute to support both programmes through an international network of voluntary Ambassadors. The Ambassadors' role will be to promote CHIRP Maritime and MARS to mariners in their local area or region, and to encourage the submission of reports and to share the learning from accidents, incidents and near-misses.

Briefing material and coaching will be provided to each of the Ambassadors. They will not be involved with the writing of individual reports; these will still need to be sent by each reporter to the CHIRP office at Farnborough (UK) and/or MARS as appropriate and dealt with in strict confidence. Nothing inhibits a report appearing in both publications if appropriate.

What's the difference?

There is often some confusion over the different roles of The Nautical Institute's MARS scheme and CHIRP Maritime. This is not surprising as they each have similar characteristics, but they serve different and complementary roles. CHIRP Maritime is an independent, confidential reporting system that allows pro-active follow-up and investigation of individual safety issues which otherwise have not been reported to ship managers or the authorities. By contrast, the primary purpose of MARS is to identify lessons learned from near-miss and recent incident reports and relay these to mariners at sea and ashore through the *Seaways* magazine and the searchable MARS website. Like CHIRP, the reports are confidential. While both the CHIRP *Maritime Feedback* publication and the MARS reports enable the promulgation of lessons learned throughout the maritime community, MARS does not provide follow-up to individual reports through investigation.

Both CHIRP and MARS accept reports of hazardous incidents, as well as those where an accident took place. A hazardous incident is any event, other than an accident, associated with the operation of a ship that involves circumstances indicating that an accident nearly occurs. It is often referred to as a 'near-miss'.

The CHIRP process

The CHIRP Director (Maritime) validates each report on receipt. Anonymous reports are not normally acted upon, as they cannot be validated. Throughout the process CHIRP makes every effort to maintain the confidentiality of the reporter. Just as in the MARS programme, CHIRP does not seek to apportion blame to any company or individual(s).

Only de-personalised data is used in discussions with third party organisations, thereby protecting the identity of the reporter. This same data is presented to the Maritime Advisory Board of

representative industry organisations for their discussion. They make recommendations on the report findings and give advice on whether there is benefit in sharing the results of the report in the *Maritime FEEDBACK* publication. The final results are fed back to the reporter. On completion of the investigation, all personal details are removed from all files. Only key information is retained in order to establish technical or systemic trends or root causes linked with Human Element behaviours. This information can be made available to safety systems and professional bodies.

CHIRP does not intend to undermine onboard safety management systems (SMS), but even where these are well established, there are many hazardous occurrences that go unreported, particularly when interfacing with third parties such as bunkering, onboard contractors, dry docking, etc. The CHIRP investigation will help all parties to develop a common understanding of the level of potential risk(s) involved and the lessons learned from the hazardous occurrence. CHIRP investigations are available at www.chirp.co.uk

“ ‘I must do something’ is much more powerful than saying ‘something must be done.’ ”

The MARS process

Similarly to CHIRP, the MARS Editor evaluates each report sent to the special MARS email address, mars@nautinst.org. Also like CHIRP, MARS accepts reports from identifiable individuals or organisations so that validation is possible, while remaining a confidential system.

The MARS Editor will ensure published reports remain anonymous and that the selected incidents provide valuable lessons learned. Some contributors have, in the past, submitted reports about legal or commercial pitfalls but these are usually not published as they do not fall under the banner of safety. Once the monthly selection of reports has been edited for style and form they are sent to the *Seaways* Editor. In addition, all published MARS reports are entered into a database that is accessible to anyone with Internet access at <http://www.nautinst.org/en/forums/mars/mars-official-reports.cfm>. The database is searchable by keyword, allowing users to easily identify reports on a particular topic.

Just as a strong safety culture should form the nucleus of an organisation's approach to managing risks, so too must a robust reporting culture be the glue that helps bind the other elements together to form a systemic approach to reducing risks to levels that are as low as reasonably practicable (see 'Creating a Reporting Culture,' *Seaways* April 2013). Both CHIRP and MARS are active players in this reporting culture. We need your help so that the marine community becomes ever safer for all involved – consider getting involved as an ambassador, and send us your reports! 📧