



The Coronavirus' impact on Maritime Safety and Vessels **What's the future in the Short and Medium Term?**

It is well documented on all news channels the coronavirus has already affected, and will continue to do for the immediate future, with no time limit. Globally, ports are issuing guidance on what seafarers, port officials, managers and owners must do to implement local and international measures to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Vessel Safety Risks Will Rise Due to Human Error.

The virus pandemic has resulted in the reduction of crew changes, and in many cases the crew will be 'stuck on board', unable to disembark due to local port quarantine measures. It has been widely reported that two-seafarers disembarked from their vessel in Taiwan's Keelung port to make phone calls to family, which demonstrates the lengths crews are going to contact family.

Prior to the coronavirus epidemic, IMRRA would scrutinize the vessel to find out if the vessel's Crew hours were in line with MLC/STCW requirements. If not, this would be a dynamic contributory factor to a higher vessel risk rating compared to fleet type average. During the pandemic IMRRA will be closely monitoring crew social media channels for a regular snapshot of crew moral, a strong indicator for future ship safety, to support the vessels operational capability.

In the short-term, the coronavirus causes considerable stress for the crews, delays and logistics challenges for the industry and an increase the amount of time spent at sea.

With the likelihood of crews not being sufficiently rested, IMRRA an increase in serious incidents directly related to insufficient rest and fatigue.

Stephen Cotton, ITF general secretary, said the federation and the ICS had grave concerns for the tens of thousands of crew members whose duty on board ships had ended, but were forced to remain at sea for additional months.

"The current deadlock not only threatens seafarer's personal health and wellbeing, but also increases the risk of marine accidents," Cotton added in a statement.

A Decline in Vessel inspections leads to a decline in vessel performance

IMRRA is in the business of ship safety, risk rating vessels for their operational effectiveness. A key part of IMRRA's vessel's risk ratings relates to the periodic safety inspections conducted by the following authorities:

- Technical Inspections
- Operational Inspections and safety reports.
- Class surveys and Certification surveys

- Dry Dock and pre-Dry Dock inspections
- Class surveys/certification surveys/annual surveys
- Safety Equipment Survey
- International oil pollution survey
- International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate
- Safety Radio Survey

All maritime NGO's are currently publishing guidelines on how to mitigate quarantine and safety protocols, and in some instances IMRRA is aware not all vessels are being inspected according to industry guidelines. With expected delays in for a vessel to accomplish all the vessel inspections, a vessel's risk rating will rise.

What about Vessel Maintenance?

In conjunction with a vessel's NGO inspection regime, IMRRA is also monitoring a vessels on-going vessel maintenance and the impact this may have non-delivery of spares.

In brief, what happens to the appointed independent contractors maintaining fire extinguishers, life boat equipment, annual servicing etc. if they cannot have access to the vessel? All shore-based contractors will also be subject to port quarantine safety measures.

Over time, the vessels will generate a higher risk due to a lack of maintenance. What happens to the independent contractors maintaining fire extinguishers, life boats etc.? Post virus, there may not be the port ecosystem.

Without the human capital (or bodies on the ground!), there is the potential for a backlog of the following additional safety checks:

- Safety Construction & Equipment surveys – knock-on effects to risk and safety management?
- Five-yearly dry dock inspections, or pre-drydock surveys?
- Terminal Safety Inspections - will these become less frequent?

So, how will the current impact of the coronavirus affect the medium to long-term future risk vessel management trends be once the immediate crisis is over?

Over the coming months there will be a clearer picture on the impact of the virus on the crews and the related types of incidents from human error.

IMRRA's analysts will also be closely monitoring vessels safety performance between port inspections to understand if there is a blip in operational safety performance due to either fatigued crews, lack of regular scheduled maintenance, or a combination of both.

For the longer-term impacts on vessel risk ratings of delayed five-yearly dry, or pre-drydock surveys, we can only wait and see!

09 April 2020
Wayne Hurley
Head of Business Development
International Maritime Risk Rating Agency