



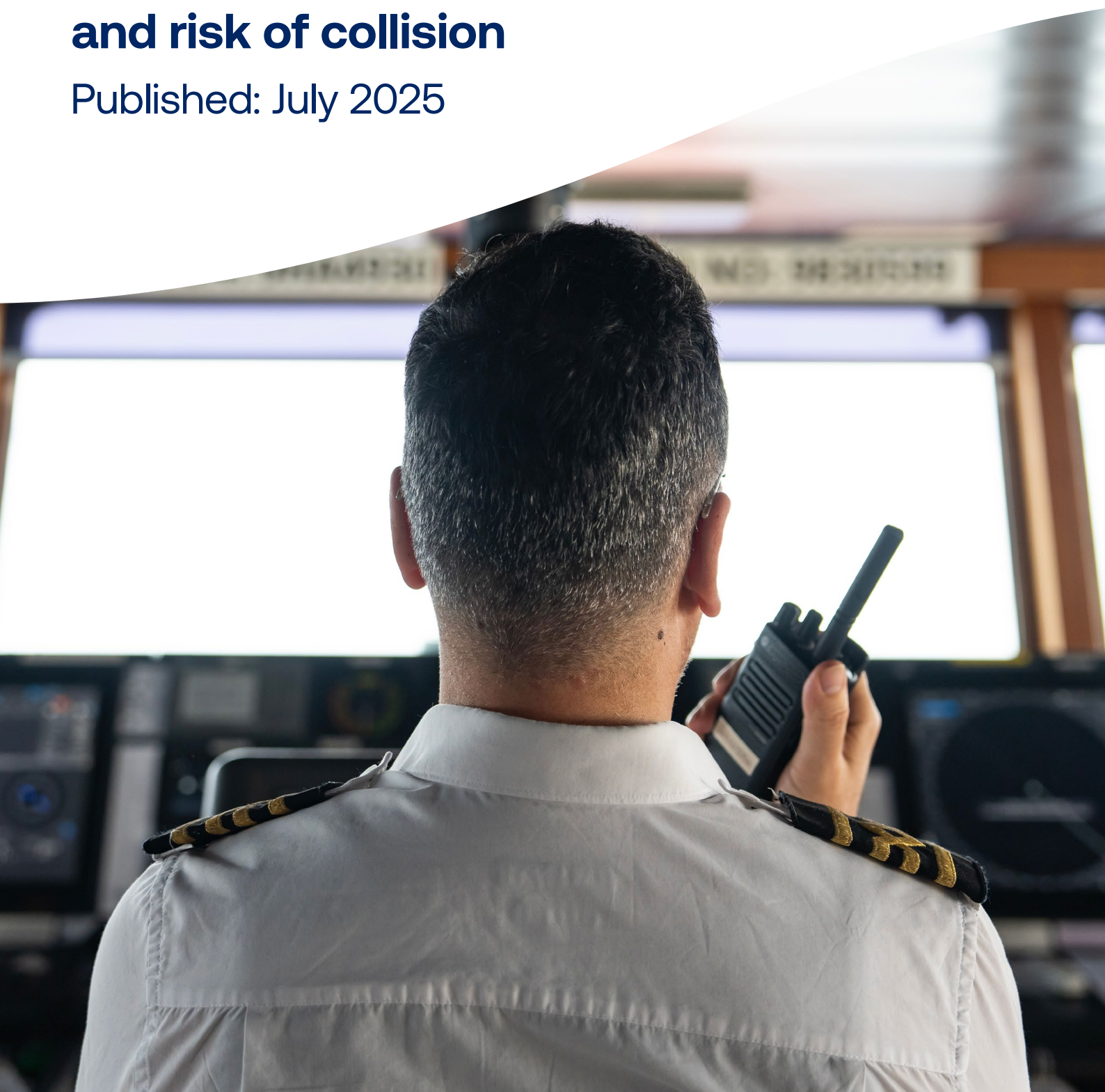
Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

Safer lives,
safer ships,
cleaner seas

MCA safety spotlight

Bridge navigational safety and risk of collision

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Issue

There have been several recent incidents where failing to keep a proper lookout and poor navigational watchkeeping practices have led to collisions and groundings involving fatalities, and serious injuries.

Navigation is both an art and a science, but neither can be practised effectively unless the watchkeeper is present on the bridge, well rested and able to focus their attention on the complex task of watchkeeping.

Notwithstanding the fundamental requirement for an alert, qualified and rested watchkeeper, technology has been put in place to enhance safety by aiding the watchkeeper in their duties. Where fitted, proper use shall be made of equipment including the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System and zone and CPA alarms on radar and ECDIS. It is important that the equipment is used to best effect and alarms are set appropriately to support, but not replace keeping a proper lookout by all available means and proper watchkeeping practices.

Incidents are occurring because of:

- distraction from navigational duties due to mobile phones, media devices or other non-navigation related tasks
- insufficient lookout or watchkeeping resource in place for the situation
- navigational aids, watch alarms or equipment is not used correctly or is muted
- watchkeepers are insufficiently rested or under the influence of drugs or alcohol

MCA prosecutions and investigations

Case 1

A UK flagged vessel collided with a Danish vessel resulting in the loss of two lives. A Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) investigation led to the Master and Company being convicted. The investigation highlighted insufficient lookouts, distraction of watchkeepers due to the use of a personal tablet device and alcohol use in the hours prior to the watch.

Case 2

A UK flagged vessel grounded on rocks resulting in serious injury to three passengers and a life changing injury to a member of the crew. The investigation led to the owner being convicted and highlighted a failure to maintain a proper lookout.

Case 3

A UK fishing vessel collided with an anchored vessel causing injuries to the crew. A MCA investigation led to the skipper being convicted and found that the watchkeeper had fallen asleep prior to the collision.

Legal requirements

Railways and Transport
Safety Act 2003, Part 4
Shipping Alcohol and Drugs

The Fishing Vessels
(Working Time: Sea-
fishermen) Regulations 2004

MSN 1884(F) Amendment 1
ILO, Work in Fishing
convention, working time

STCW Convention (1978, as amended):

- establishes minimum standards for watchkeeping personnel on seagoing ships
- requires certified competence for officers and ratings assigned to watchkeeping duties and mandates continuous watchkeeping by qualified personnel on the bridge, engine room, and other critical areas

STCW Code – Part A (mandatory standards):

- Bridge Watchkeeping (Regulation VIII/2):
- a proper lookout must be maintained at all times using sight, hearing, and all available means
- watch arrangements must ensure safe navigation and compliance with COLREGs (Collision Regulations)
- the officer in charge must not be assigned other duties that could interfere with the watch

Collision Regulations (COLREGs, 1972):

- complements STCW by specifying the rules for maintaining a proper lookout and safe navigation practices

MGN 137 (M+F) Look out during periods of darkness and restricted visibility:

- during the hours of darkness and restricted visibility, a separate and dedicated lookout must be maintained at all times



Action required by crew and companies

All seafarers and operators must ensure that they are familiar with the legal and company regulations concerning alcohol and drugs and adhere to its contents.

Review the Safety Management System to ensure that there is clear guidance and instructions for watchkeeping practices, including the use of alarm systems, where fitted. Distractions which detract from watchkeeping safety must be avoided.

The regulations concerning working hours exist for both the health and wellbeing of individuals and the safety of the ship and all onboard. Fatigue reduces the capability and safety of watchkeepers, an effect exacerbated over extended periods. Records of working hours must be maintained accurately and Masters should be given full support from their owners/operators to ensure that the crew remain within hours of work requirements.





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