

Keeping charts up to date



The International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) requires that, "All ships should carry adequate and up-to-date charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, notices to mariners, tide tables, and all other nautical publications necessary for the intended voyage".

Yet, from time to time, the Club receives a report from a ship inspector that the charts or other nautical publications on an entered ship are out of date. Two incidents reviewed recently by the Club emphasise why compliance with the requirement is imperative.

In the first case, a telecommunications company alleged that a submarine cable had been damaged by a ship's anchor.

The first assumption was that, if the anchor had contacted the cable, then it must have been because it was dragging and the ship had not been able to recover the anchor in due time. However, the Club-appointed surveyor quickly established that the ship had, in fact, anchored directly over the cable

but that the bridge team had been completely unaware of the hazard beneath them. The surveyor identified that the ship had used an old edition of the chart, which predated the laying of the cable. Apparently, on preparing the passage plan, the second officer had not checked that he had the current edition of the chart.

In the second case, the investigation into the circumstances in which a ship suffered damage as it struck a hazardous wreck confirmed that the current edition of the chart was in use but that it had not been properly corrected. A chart correction showing the wreck had been issued some three years previously.

Any member interested in obtaining details of refresher courses for their seafarers on chart and publication management is welcome to contact the Club for suggestions. Moreover, the UK Hydrographic Office publishes 'How to keep your Admiralty Charts Up-to-Date', which is a recommended read for ships using British Admiralty Charts.

Poor passage planning

The Club's ship inspection programme occasionally identifies a passage plan that is little more than a list of waypoints entered into the ship's GPS. Our loss prevention efforts will continue to emphasise the need to follow best practice in this vital aspect of navigation, and the following example illustrates the risks that can arise from inadequate passage planning. A bulk carrier grounded heavily as it slowed to pick up a pilot while inward-bound to a discharge port. The ship was set off course by a strong cross-tide and struck a shoal that was clearly marked on the chart. Professional salvors refloated the ship but the grounding had caused it significant damage. The investigation into the many causative factors highlighted that the effect of tides and tidal streams was completely absent from the entire passage plan, which is contrary to the requirements of Chapter V of SOLAS.

That the ship would be set across the track should have been clear from the information provided in the tidal table printed on the chart. But the failure to allow for set was even more surprising given that the ship had been at anchor for several days and had to reposition after the strong tides caused the anchor to drag. Any member interested in training aids covering passage planning is welcome to contact the Club at stoploss@londonpandi.com for suggestions.

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