APA CONTINUES TO BE FOCUSED ON PILOT LADDER SAFETY

Continuously improving pilot transfer safety is a key APA focus. Working through IMPA, APA led the effort to update the SOLAS pilot ladder regulation (Regulation V/23) in 2012. Among other things, that revision led to the prohibition of mechanical pilot hoists, required cutting back ship rubbing bands around the rigging of the ladder, and regular inspection of pilot ladder equipment. The work to enhance pilot ladder safety continued at a recent International Organization for Standardization (ISO) meeting.

An ISO working group revising the organization’s standard for pilot ladders (ISO Standard 799:2004) met May 8-10 at the International Maritime University of Panama. The meeting was attended by IMPA Secretary-General Nick Cutmore, APA Navigation Technology Director Bill Cairns, and other pilot representatives. This meeting was critical because SOLAS Regulation V/23 refers to ISO standard 799:2004, which has not been updated since the amended SOLAS regulation V/23 came into force in 2012.

Having done much of its work through correspondence since its last meeting in May 2017, the working group was able to finalize the new standard at this meeting. The new standard will be put to a vote of ISO in the coming weeks and, barring any significant opposition, should be published as a standard soon thereafter.

This new standard will raise the bar for pilot ladder construction and maintenance. For example, the new standard would limit the number of replacement steps to two, and the number of replacement spreader steps to one. After that, the ladder must be rebuilt by the manufacturer (or its designated representative). The standard will also restrict the use of slotted steps to replacement steps only.

The work of the ISO group will continue with the development of new sections of the standard on maintenance of ladders and associated equipment (accommodation ladder, pilot ladder winch reels, securing ropes, man ropes, etc.). APA will continue to participate in this important work.

At a recent meeting of an APA member pilot group, APA President, Captain Jorge Viso, addressed pilot ladder safety: “While the continued vitality of our profession is my greatest concern, I intend to make pilot ladder safety a priority. Climbing up and down the ladder daily is physically the most dangerous part of our job. On average, worldwide we lose 2-3 pilots each year during transfers.”

In the US alone, over the past 12 years there have been 5 pilots and 1 boat operator who have lost their lives during pilot transfer operations.

What can pilots do to enhance ladder safety? KNOW and REPORT...know the pilot ladder requirements and report any deficiencies to the USCG. SOLAS V/23, the accompanying IMO Resolution A.1045(27), and the IMPA pilot ladder poster are all available on the APA website under the tab “Positions, Resolutions, and Best Practices, etc.” Pilots should periodically review these documents. As for reporting pilot ladder problems, it is important to be specific (e.g., broken step, more than 3 replacement steps, not properly secured to the deck, etc.)

Captain Viso concluded, “We’re all Type A personalities and want to get the job done no matter what. However, when we fail to call out pilot ladder deficiencies we may very well cause another pilot to be seriously injured or worse.”
IMO TO REVIEW POSSIBLE LEGAL RERAINTS ON AUTONOMOUS SHIP OPERATIONS

The IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) has initiated a two-year project to identify provisions in IMO instruments (such as SOLAS, COLREGS, and STCW) that might prohibit or restrict the operation of “Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships” (MASS). Meeting at its 99th session from May 16-25 in London, MSC approved a framework for the “regulatory scoping exercise,” including preliminary definitions of MASS and degrees of autonomy, as well as a methodology and plan of work for conducting the exercise. A correspondence group was established and directed to begin its work as soon as possible and submit a report to the next MSC session (100th) in December 2018.

This is an important project with possible serious ramifications for the entire maritime community, including the piloting profession. Even if, as many people believe, operation of unmanned or remotely controlled vessels on ocean voyages will not happen for the foreseeable future due to technological constraints, economic considerations, and safety issues, making widespread changes to the complex and interconnected web of international shipping regulations to accommodate the possibility of such operations could have impacts extending beyond MASS.

As one example, some countries and interests promoting MASS have already proposed that the IMO establish a system of pilotage exemptions for the vessels. The IMO has consistently declined in the past to impose mandatory regulations of pilotage, however, recognizing that pilotage is, and should be, a national (port state) matter. An effort to put pilotage regulation under IMO control would be a dramatic break from precedent and would be difficult to limit to MASS.

The APA will be actively participating in the scoping exercise through both IMPA and the U.S. delegation to IMO.

INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF IALA VTS COMMITTEE

Several countries and other organizations have proposed that IMO revise Resolution A.857(20) on the Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services (VTS). This prompted IALA, which has some jurisdiction over VTS, to hold a meeting to discuss the topic. APA is always watchful of efforts to expand VTS authority; so Bill Cairns, APA Navigation Technology Director and prior member of the IALA VTS Committee, attended this meeting. The meeting was held at IALA Headquarters from April 10 to 13, and was attended by 33 Delegates from 22 organizations, including Nick Cutmore, Secretary-General of IMPA.

This IALA meeting was tasked with providing input to IALA’s VTS Committee, which will meet in September 2018. The meeting considered a broad swath of VTS issues, including the role of government oversight, changing traditional VTS boundaries, types of VTS services (i.e., information service, navigation assistance, traffic organization), result-oriented instructions (from VTS to the vessel), and personnel qualifications, training and certification.

The meeting attendees recommended that a workshop be organized to broaden the participation and ensure engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including pilots. APA, along with IMPA, will continue to track these efforts and participate as needed.

APSA PILOTS ATTEND DAKAR IMPA CONFERENCE

The 24th IMPA Congress, which was held in Dakar, Senegal from April 23-27, was attended by 15 U.S. pilots, representing 8 APA-member pilot associations. APA President, Captain Jorge Viso, Captain Dan Jordan (Columbia River Bar), Captain Eric von Brandenfels (Puget Sound), and Paul Kirchner (APA Executive Director-General Counsel) were speakers. The Congress’ agenda is available at: http://impadakar2018.com/program/

For more on the IMPA Congress, which was attended by more 350 representatives from 44 countries and 63 pilot organizations, see page 4.
INFRASTRUCTURE BILL PASSES HOUSE—BUT NO HARBOR MAINTENANCE TRUST FUND FIX

On June 6th, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2018. This bipartisan legislation provides for improvements to the Nation’s ports, inland waterways and other maritime infrastructure, but failed to include much discussed improvements to the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

The bill was introduced by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA), Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman Garret Graves (R-LA), and Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Grace Napolitano (D-CA).

Chairman Shuster said, “The WRDA makes investments in the type of infrastructure that is vital to every American and every part of the country. I look forward to working with the Senate to send a final WRDA measure to the president that builds our water infrastructure, grows our economy, and creates jobs.”

“I support this legislation because of the many other provisions which will improve safety, sustain jobs, and provide improvements to projects undertaken by the Army Corps, but I am disappointed that the bill does not include a bipartisan provision that would have ensured that funds collected in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) are used only for harbor maintenance—not for unrelated government spending.” DeFazio added, “Unlocking the HMTF is key to ensuring we’re not just adding to the $100 billion dollar backlog of projects at the Corps of Engineers, but are actually using existing funds to make real investments in our Nation’s ports, harbors and waterways.”

Chairman Graves stressed, “This bill is about giving taxpayers their money’s worth. Americans deserve...competitive navigation channels capable of reliably moving goods into and across the nation.” Ranking Member Napolitano added, “I thank Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, and Chairman Graves for their work on this WRDA. It includes important provisions that require the Army Corps to work more with local communities and cities, in every congressional district, on improving water infrastructure to meet their individual needs.”

The Senate continues to work on its version of the WRDA.

NATIONAL MARITIME DAY PROCLAMATION

On National Maritime Day, we recognize the critical role the United States Merchant Marine plays in bolstering national security and facilitating economic growth. We honor our merchant mariners for their contributions to connecting the States, supporting our military, and cementing ties among our allies.

Long known as the “Fourth Arm of Defense,” the United States Merchant Marine has served with valor and distinction in every American conflict. The important work of the Merchant Marine was never more evident than during World War II, when merchant mariners sailed dangerous seas and fought enemies as they connected our Armed Forces fighting abroad to vital supplies produced by hardworking Americans at home. In the course of their valiant efforts, they endured the loss of more than 730 large vessels, and more than 6,000 merchant mariners died at sea or as prisoners of war.

Today, American mariners facilitate the shipment of hundreds of billions of dollars of goods along maritime trade routes for American businesses and consumers. Merchant mariners are ambassadors of good will, projecting a peaceful United States presence along the sea lanes of the world and into regions of core strategic importance to our Nation. Often risking their lives by sailing into war zones, our merchant mariners continue to support our troops overseas by providing them with needed cargo and logistical support. They also advance humanitarian missions worldwide, including last year’s effort to ship tens of thousands of containers of lifesaving supplies to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after they had been devastated by hurricanes.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as “National Maritime Day” to commemorate the first transoceanic voyage by a steamship in 1819 by the S.S. Savannah. By this resolution, the Congress has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2018, as National Maritime Day. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this observance and to display the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eighteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-second.

DONALD J. TRUMP
NOAA PUBLISHES 2018 HURRICANE FORECAST

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued a news release containing its forecast for the 2018 North Atlantic hurricane season.

NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a 75-percent chance that the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season will be near or above normal. Forecasters predict a 35 percent chance of an above normal season, a 40 percent chance of a near normal season, and a 25 percent chance of a below normal season.

“With the advances made in hardware and computing over the course of the last year, the ability of NOAA scientists to both predict the path of storms and warn Americans who may find themselves in harm’s way is unprecedented,” said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. “The devastating hurricane season of 2017 demonstrated the necessity for prompt and accurate hurricane forecasts.”

NOAA’s forecasters predict a 70-percent likelihood of 10 to 16 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 5 to 9 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 1 to 4 major hurricanes. An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes.

The news release is available at: www.noaa.gov/media-release/forecasters-predict-near-or-above-normal-2018-atlantic-hurricane-season

NTSB ISSUES SUMMARY OF EL FARO REPORT

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued a 16-page illustrated digest summarizing the critical events and decisions that led to the Oct. 1, 2015, sinking of El Faro and the loss of all 33 crewmembers. The digest also synopsizes the more than 60 recommendations issued throughout the NTSB’s investigation of the sinking. According to an NTSB press release, “The infographics and summary make for an easy-to-read digest, compared with the thousands of pages that comprise the NTSB’s final report and associated investigative documents.”

The digest can be found at: www.ntsb.gov/investigations/AccidentReports/Reports/SPC1801.pdf

MORE FROM THE 24TH IMPA CONGRESS IN DAKAR, SENEGAL (continued from page 2)

In addition to a full week of speeches by senior government and IMPA officials and substantive discussions on important topics such as “engagement with government,” “helicopter operations,” “tug use with VLCVs,” “PPU developments” and “training and proficiency standards,” elections were also conducted. Following the elections, the IMPA executive body is constituted as follows:

President: Captain Simon Pelletier (Canada)
Senior VP: Captain Jean-Philippe Casanova (France)
VP: Captain Oumar Drame (Senegal)
VP: Captain Ricardo Falcao (Brazil)
VP: Captain Alvaro Moreno Constantino (Panama)
VP: Captain J.S. Choi (South Korea)
VP: Captain John Pearn (United Kingdom)
ADVISORY COMMITTEES RECOMMEND 5-YEAR PILOT MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

Three federal advisory committees charged with giving advice to the Coast Guard on mariner credentialing and medical review matters have recommended that the Coast Guard take steps to permit pilots to be issued 5-year Medical Certificates rather than the current 2-year certificates.

During meetings in March and April, the Merchant Mariner Medical Advisory Committee (MEDMAC), the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC) and the Great Lakes Pilotage Advisory Committee (GLPAC) thoroughly discussed and debated the matter and each concluded that it was appropriate for the Coast Guard to issue Medical Certificates to pilots with durations of up to five years.

In making its recommendation, MEDMAC stated, “In light of the fact that there are no credible studies, investigative findings, or evidence of any kind to suggest that moving pilots from 2-year medical certificates to 5-year certificates (as is the case with Medical Certificates for ALL other U.S. mariners with domestic merchant mariner credentials) would in any way impact navigation or marine safety, MEDMAC recommends that the Coast Guard amend the applicable regulations to provide that pilots be issued 5-year medical certificates.”

Each of the three advisory committees also noted that since pilots are already required by federal statute (46 U.S.C. § 7101(e)(3)) to satisfactorily complete an annual physical examination, this recommended change would not impact public or navigation safety, but would reduce private sector and government expenses, provide much needed regulatory relief to pilots, and reduce the administrative workload to the Coast Guard’s medical review program staff at the National Maritime Center.

It is important to note that even though Congress has authorized MEDMAC, MERPAC and GLPAC to make recommendations to the Coast Guard, the agency is under no obligation to enact such recommendations. The APA, citing the recommendations of these federal advisory committees, will engage appropriate Coast Guard Headquarters offices and the National Maritime Center to discuss this topic further and, as appropriate, will recommend potential amendments to the federal regulations to move pilots to 5-year Medical Certificates. Any such regulatory changes typically take several years to complete.

APA will keep member groups apprised of any developments on this important matter.

NMC ISSUES NEW CG-719K FORMS, INCLUDING UPDATED MEDICAL FORM

In 2015, the Coast Guard issued a revised medical form (CG-719K) that had so many flaws the APA viewed it as unusable. As a result, the APA recommended, and the Coast Guard agreed, that the NMC would continue to accept applications for Medical Certificates submitted via the older version of the 719K (Rev 01-09) until an new form was issued.

On June 1, 2018, the NMC announced that new CG-719 forms, including the CG-719K (Application for Medical Certificate), had been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. A copy of the complete NMC announcement is available at: www.dco.uscg.mil/Portals/9/NMC/pdfs/announcements/2018/new_cg719_series_forms.pdf

While the new CG-719K form has a number of improvements over the previous version of the form and corrects items the APA brought to the attention of the Coast Guard, it is important to highlight a significant change that the NMC made regarding the reporting of medications on the CG-719K.

The new CG-719K requires that ALL medications - prescription AND nonprescription - filled, refilled and/or taken within 30 days of signing the CG-719K form must be reported. Previously, only prescription medications were subject to this reporting standard (non-prescription or over-the-counter medications had a separate reporting standard).

A transition period has been established which will allow mariners to apply for a credential (including renewals) and Medical Certificates using either the old or new 719K forms. Note, however, any application for a credential or medical certificate submitted after September 1, 2018 must be on the new forms.

APA strongly recommends that pilots thoroughly review the new forms and contact the APA office with any questions.
APA NEWS

VIRGINIA PILOT ASSOCIATION RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

On March 19, the Coast Guard awarded its Distinguished Public Service Award to the Virginia Pilot Association (VPA). The award was given in recognition of the VPA’s support for safe navigation and resiliency of Virginia’s ports and waterways.

The award read, in part, “The Association’s exceptional proficiency and coordination fully prepared the port to safely receive the east coast’s first 1200 foot long Ultra Large Container Vessel, followed by weekly arrivals in the port’s narrow federal navigation channels.” The citation went on to say, “A trusted advisor to the Captain of the Port, the Association’s invaluable insights have also fully informed any decision to restrict navigation in advance of hurricanes, tropical storms, and strong winter storms. The Virginia Pilots Association’s dedication, professionalism, and unwavering support for the maritime community is most heartily commended.”

SAVANNAH AWAITS!

Don’t forget to register for the upcoming APA Biennial Convention in Savannah, Georgia.

The Convention is being hosted by the Savannah Pilots at the Hyatt Regency Savannah from September 30th through October 5th. For more information, including how to register and make hotel reservations, visit www.AmericanPilots.org and click “2018 Convention Info.”

RETIRING SAN FRANCISCO BAR PILOT HONORED BY KINGS POINT

Captain Nancy L. Wagner, recently retired San Francisco Bar Pilot, has been selected to serve as “Distinguished Alumnus” speaker during the Merchant Marine Academy’s Commencement Ceremony, to be held on Saturday, June 16.

Captain Wagner graduated from Kings Point with the Class of 1978, as one of the first eight female graduates from a federal service academy. She went on to sail for Exxon and advanced her license, earning her Unlimited Master License in 1985. Two years later, Captain Wagner joined the San Francisco Bar Pilot Apprentice Program and became the country’s first female ship pilot in 1990.

ADMIRAL BUZBY PRESENTS AWARDS TO TWO MARYLAND PILOTS

On May 8, MARAD Administrator, Rear Admiral Mark Buzby, presented the Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal to Captain Noah Seiple and Captain Joseph Schwartzstein, both of the Association of Maryland Pilots (the presentation is pictured below).

The two pilots earned this prestigious award for their outstanding performance while assisting the cruise ship Carnival Pride and its 2,100 passengers during Hurricane Hermine in September 2016.

The MARAD award citation recounts, “To reach the Carnival Pride, [the two pilots] endured 20 foot seas and winds up to 80 knots for more than one hour and thirty minutes before boarding the vessel. During the transit to Baltimore, although encountering similar conditions, the Maryland Pilots expertly guided the vessel to safe haven.”

The Merchant Marine Meritorious Service Medal citations concluded by stating, “In unhesitatingly answering the call to assist, despite severe weather and heavy seas, and risk to their personal safety, Captain Seiple and Captain Schwartzstein acted in the highest traditions of the Association of Maryland Pilots and the United States sea services.”