



IMPA Guidance on the Master - Pilot Exchange (MPX)

Introduction

Each Pilotage assignment should begin with an exchange of information between the master and the pilot. This exchange is a prelude to a successful passage under pilotage and is a key component of effective BRM during the passage.

As with all properly constructed supporting text on pilotage, it is necessary to begin with the core foundation of IMO Resolution A960 (23) Section 5: -

5. Master – pilot information exchange

5.1 The master and the pilot should exchange information regarding navigational procedures, local conditions and rules and the ship's characteristics. This information exchange should be a continuous process that generally continues for the duration of the pilotage.

5.2 Each pilotage assignment should begin with an information exchange between the pilot and the master. The amount and subject matter of the information to be exchanged should be determined by the specific navigation demands of the pilotage operation. Additional information can be exchanged as the operation proceeds.

5.3 Each competent pilotage authority should develop a standard exchange of information practice, taking into account regulatory requirements and best practice in the pilotage area. Pilots should consider using an information card, form, checklist or other memory aid to ensure that essential exchange items are covered. If an information card or standard forms is used by pilots locally regarding the anticipated passage, the layout of such a card or form should supplement and assist, not substitute for, the verbal information exchange.

5.4 This exchange of information should include at least:

1. presentation of a completed standard Pilot Card. In addition, information should be provided on rate of turn at different speeds, turning circles, stopping distances and, if available, other appropriate data;

2. general agreement on plans and procedures, including contingency plans, for the anticipated passage;

3. discussion of any special conditions such as weather, depth of water, tidal currents and marine traffic that may be expected during the passage;

4. discussion of any unusual ship-handling characteristics, machinery difficulties, navigational equipment problems or crew limitations that could affect the operation, handling or safe manoeuvring of the ship;

5. information on berthing arrangements; use, characteristics and number of tugs; mooring boats and other external facilities;

6. information on mooring arrangements; *and*

7. confirmation of the language to be used on the bridge and with external parties.

5.5 It should be clearly understood that any passage plan is a basic indication of preferred intention and both the pilot and the master should be prepared to depart from it when circumstances so dictate.

5.6 Pilots and competent pilotage authorities should be aware of the voyage planning responsibilities of masters under applicable IMO instruments.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

The following is offered by IMPA as guidance for the development of practices for the exchange of information between the master and the pilot regarding navigational procedures, local conditions and rules, and the ship's characteristics.

Initial conference

- The initial conference is an opportunity not only to exchange information that the pilot and master each need, but also for the pilot and the master to establish an appropriate working relationship that will continue throughout the pilotage assignment.
- The amount and nature of the information to be exchanged in the initial conference should be determined by the specific navigation demands of the pilotage assignment. This information should typically include:

the ships 's navigational characteristics and numbers of tugs to be used, as appropriate; and the language to be used on the bridge and with external parties.

- For some assignments, particularly those involving a long run or difficult manoeuvres at the beginning, not all relevant information must, or should, be exchanged in the initial conference. Additional information can be exchanged as the assignment proceeds and communication should be understood as a continuous process that generally continues for the duration of the assignment.

Ship's Pilot Card/Wheelhouse Poster

- Pilots should be aware of regulations requiring ships to have a "Pilots Card" and wheelhouse poster containing manoeuvring data and other information concerning the ship.
- If the pilot, in the exercise of his or her best judgment, considers the information provided orally by the master about the ship and its characteristics unclear or insufficient, the pilot should consult the Pilot Card/wheelhouse poster to confirm or supplement the information from the master.
- Pilots should be aware that information on Pilot card/wheelhouse poster about a ship's propulsion, manoeuvring and handling characteristics may not be accurate when manoeuvring in the particular waters of the pilot's area or under local conditions that may be present during the pilotage operation. Such information must be based on "new vessel" conditions (which may be affected by factor such as bottom fouling, propeller/rudder damage, or trim) and operation in the open sea.

- When presented by the master and crew with a Pilot Card or other document containing the characteristics or operational conditions of the ship, pilots should keep in mind that they are under no obligation to sign or initial such documents and that a signature or initial could be construed as a form of confirmation that the information on the document is accurate.

Pilot Information Card ("MPX Card")

- Pilots and pilot groups should consider developing an information card ("MPX Card") to give to the master at the time of the initial conference and be used as a guide for discussion during the conference and the subsequent pilotage assignment.
- The MPX Card should include information specific to navigation in the local pilotage area as well as the instructions or request concerning the pilot's needs from the master and crew.

As stated in A960, the MPX Card should supplement, not substitute for, the verbal information exchange.

Absent or unwilling master

- An effective exchange requires the participation of a master who is present, is willing, and has sufficient skills, knowledge, and language proficiency to provide the information needed by the pilot and to understand the pilot's instructions and requests.
- The pilot should make all reasonable efforts to obtain the presence of the master for the purpose of conducting the exchange conference.
- If the master or bridge crew fails to provide the information needed by the pilot or if an unsatisfactory exchange leads the pilot to doubt the ability of the master or crew to perform the navigation duties normally expected during the assignment, the pilot should use his/her best professional judgment to determine whether it is safe to proceed with the assignment.
- If a pilot determines that an assignment can safely proceed despite an unsatisfactory exchange, the pilot should adjust his or her pilotage practice accordingly and report the master's refusal to engage in an exchange or to provide required information.
- If a pilot determines that it is not safe to proceed with an assignment due to an unsatisfactory exchange, the pilot should refuse to proceed, advise the master/bridge crew on anchoring the vessel or take other steps to secure the vessel's safety, and notify appropriate authorities by the best means available.

The role of the Pilot

- The pilot, pilot group, and/or competent pilotage authority may consider it appropriate to have the MPX Card and the initial conference convey the legal status and role of the pilot licensed for the compulsory pilotage area where the assignment takes place. i.e. whether she/he will have the conduct of the navigation.
- Depending on the national or local laws regarding compulsory pilotage, the exchange may also note that the only situation where a person other than the pilot – this being the master – can legally take conduct of the ship is if he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that the pilot's actions are endangering the safety of the ship. It should be added that, in this event, the master must file a report with the pilotage authority setting out his or her reasons.

Use of auto-pilot and auto-tracking systems

- The MPX Card and initial conference should clearly convey that an autopilot or auto-tracking system may only be used with the express consent of the pilot and that, in those situations when such systems are used, a qualified helmsman shall be ready, at all times and without delay, to take over steering control.

Passage planning

- SOLASV/34 requires the master to have prepared a "voyage plan", and IMO Resolution A893 requires this to be "from berth to berth." IMO Resolution A960 recommends that the master and the pilot should discuss their respective intentions and expectations regarding the anticipated passage and reach a "general agreement on plans and procedures, including contingency plans." A960 further cautions that "it should be clearly understood that any passage plan is a basic indication of preferred intention and both the pilot and the master should be prepared to depart from it when circumstances so dictate."

Ships calling on a regular basis

- The information exchange should not be abandoned for ships that call on a frequent basis; such vessels have the potential to induce complacency.
- The exchange for such ships can, and should, be adjusted, however with the focus on items, concerning the ship or the local conditions, that may be changed since the previous call or are otherwise pertinent to the particular pilotage operation.

Pilot-to-pilot transfer

- The transferor pilot should request the master's presence during the transfer.
- Recognizing that the circumstances of many pilot-to-pilot transfers do not allow time for extensive discussion among the two pilots and the master, pilots should focus on quickly exchanging the most critical information, including any unusual handling or operational characteristics of the vessel.
- Where practical, the transferor pilot should repeat to the transferee pilot information about the ship previously provided by the master, in the master's presence, and ask the master to confirm that the information is correct.

Training in the Master-Pilot Information Exchange

- The master-pilot information exchange should be an important focus of initial and continuous training of pilots, particularly Bridge Resource Management courses for pilots and for ship's bridge crews.
- Initial training should cover statutory requirement, recognition of language and cultural impediments to effective communication and techniques for overcoming those, and best practices in the pilotage area.
- Continuous training should review initial training items and examine casualty reports, new practices of other pilots, and studies dealing with the subject.

Continuing Communication

- The initial conference should not be the end of communication and information sharing.
- The pilot should convey during the initial conference the need to communicate throughout the pilotage operation and the pilot's continuing need for information.
- The pilot should conclude the conference by asking the master if he or she has questions and expressing the pilot's willingness to answer questions that might arise during the passage.



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