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IMPA Position Statement - Management Systems

Management systems have been in use in the piloting profession for many years. Like other entities throughout the world, many IMPA pilot groups have long had quality assurance programs, such as quality management systems (QMS), safety management systems (SMS), risk management systems or integrated management systems (ISM).

Quality assurance systems do not replace the need for, and the value of, establishing and maintaining well-regulated compulsory pilotage systems.

IMPA notes that quality management systems that meet the requirements – including audits by reputable independent external parties – of recognized international standards maintained by the ISO or other similar organizations, do not deal with aspects of pilotage systems that are, or should typically be, regulated. Moreover, such systems cannot replace or supersede applicable legislation and regulation.

IMPA also notes that recognized international quality management systems do not, and are not meant to, measure, assess, control or supersede the manner in which duly-licensed pilots exercise their professional judgment or conduct their piloting practices on board vessels. As such, they do not provide an assessment of the quality of the execution of pilotage assignments.

IMPA further notes that the purpose of recognized international quality management systems is to document the management of processes supporting pilotage operations, so as to foster continuous improvement in the management of these administrative and support functions. Such systems are not disciplinary instruments or compliance tools, and it is widely understood that using quality management systems in such a manner would be detrimental to the pursuit of continuous improvement and would negate any rationale for implementing such systems.

IMPA believes that when selecting and implementing quality assurance systems, pilots should determine their own needs. IMPA further believes that systems should be customized to reflect the local circumstances where the systems are applied and that, in all cases, the systems should seek to foster continuous improvement through enhanced communications, collegiality and ongoing learning.