

NORTH P&I CLUB SUPPORTS INITIATIVE TO REDUCE US HEALTHCARE CLAIMS

4 SEPTEMBER 2012

The 'A' rated, 170 million GT North P&I Club is supporting a new initiative to help its Members reduce the risk of being hit by excessive medical bills in the USA. Called 'First Call', the innovative scheme has been developed by two of North's long-standing US correspondents, Hudson Tactix and Shuman Consulting Services.

According to North P&I Claims Manager Julie Pichler, 'The scheme is entirely optional but Members who have trialled it so far have made significant savings on previously experienced medical costs. In some instances, they have also been able to release crew members earlier from hospital avoiding unnecessary repatriation and prolonged recuperation.'

US hospitals can be known for charging high fees for treating insured foreign nationals, and extended hospital stays for relatively minor injuries and illnesses are not uncommon. For crew members this can often mean they are unable to rejoin their ships, requiring them to be repatriated and substituted for the remainder of the voyage. The high medical bills and associated repatriation costs fall on shipowners, either through P&I insurance deductibles or via increased P&I premiums.

'As soon as a crew member on one of our entered ships needs medical treatment in the USA, we recommend our members use the First Call dedicated telephone numbers,' says Pichler. 'Local staff from Hudson or Shuman will then ensure the crew member is taken directly from the ship to a reputable and fully audited treatment facility, ensuring they receive excellent medical attention as quickly and as cost-effectively as possible.'

'Depending on the seriousness of the injury or illness, the First Call team will continue to monitor the crew member's progress throughout their stay in the USA and, where necessary, assist with repatriation. Medical services provided by the hospital and the associated costs will be monitored closely, as will the welfare of the crew member in the event of a prolonged hospital stay,' says Pichler.

The First Call service will initially covers 25 principal ports in and around the US west, east and south coasts. It will be extended to all major US ports by the end of 2012. North says Members are free to continue using local agents and other US correspondents for organising or advising on medical care, but believes they will incur substantially lower costs using the First Call scheme.

For further information contact: [Julie Pichler](#) or [Kim Heaselden](#) +44 191 232 5221