

Press Release

NORTH 
SERVICE, STRENGTH, QUALITY

NORTH P&I CLUB WARNS ON POTENTIAL DANGERS OF NEW TECHNOLOGY ON SHIPS

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North P&I Club has warned its members that despite the enormous benefits of digital technology on and around ships, there may also be some downsides. In addition to its recent warning on cyber threats, the club highlights some less obvious risks from the digital age in the latest issue of its loss prevention newsletter *Signals* – including video calls, emails, mobile devices and even 3D printing.

Loss prevention director Tony Baker says, 'While many ships now offer technology such as satellite video calling to keep crews in touch with loved ones back home, care should be taken to ensure this does not make matters worse. For some seafarers, having easy access to friends, family and their ongoing domestic problems could lead to increased anxiety compared to the traditional clean break of departure.'

Baker says digital technology may also be compounding the isolation problems at sea by reducing social interaction on board. 'Rather than chat, play games or even watch videos with other crew members, it is now all too easy to for seafarers to retreat to their cabins with their mobile devices.'

'It is in the general interests of the ship operator, vessel and crew to ensure a decent level of social interaction on board. Occasionally getting out the dart board, playing cards or board games will forge relationships and help the crew to be happy. A happy crew works more effectively, more efficiently and is more likely to be able to help individuals deal with any issues of isolation or anxiety.'

In a separate development, North warns shipowners to be aware of potential criminal use of 3D scanners and printers. These are apparently now being used to clone and replace the security seals on shipping containers after break-ins. 'The seals can be made within 10 minutes and include all the relevant identification marks, so thefts may remain undetected until containers reach their final destinations,' says deputy loss prevention director Colin Gillespie.

Another article in *Signals* alerts North's members to the growing problem of email fraud, resulting in fraudulent misdirection of payments due under charterparties and other shipping contracts. 'Good, common-sense IT security is the key defence to protecting the financial interests of everybody involved in shipping transactions,' says Gillespie. In the previous issue of *Signals* North also warned its members of the importance of securing all electronic systems both to protect the safety of the vessel and to ensure compliance with an imminent raft of national and international cyber-security regulations.

Gillespie concludes, 'The digital age has brought extraordinary benefits to the shipping industry and to crews, particularly in terms of improved safety, efficiency and communications. However, it is important for shipowners and seafarers not to let digital technology completely replace vital shipboard activities such as social interaction, teambuilding and a hands-on, common-sense approach to safety and security.'

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

1. *Signals* issue 102, published in January 2016, is available for free download from North's website at www.nepia.com/publications/loss-prevention-publications/signals/.
2. North is a leading global marine insurer providing P&I, FD&D, war risks and ancillary insurance to 130 million GT of owned tonnage on a mutual basis and 45 million GT of chartered tonnage. Through its guaranteed subsidiary Sunderland Marine, North is also a leading insurer of fishing vessels, small craft and aquaculture risks. The Club is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK with regional offices in Greece, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore and Sunderland Marine offices worldwide. North is a leading member of the International Group of P&I Clubs (IG), with 11.6% of the IG's owned tonnage. The 13 IG clubs provide liability cover for approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage and, as a member of the IG, North protects and promotes the interests of the international shipping industry.