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Printed By Valerio Fabri

Shipping warned it risks losing crews if it abandons seafarers

Shipping must solve the crew change crisis or risk alienating its workforce, d'Amico Società di Navigazione's fleet director Salvatore d'Amico has warned

16 Jun 2020 | **NEWS**

by Declan Bush | @Declan_LL | declan.bush@informa.com

Just 25%-30% of needed crew changes are taking place, the Capital Link forum was told



MANY SEAFARERS ARE "RUNNING AWAY" FROM THE INDUSTRY OUT OF FEARS THE RISKS ARE TOO GREAT, ACCORDING TO SALVATORE D'AMICO.

SEAFARERS may abandon shipping if the industry does not solve the crew change crisis, a webinar has been warned.

"We are risking that tomorrow there will be no seafarers," Salvatore d'Amico told a Capital Link webinar.

"It's not a matter of putting them in a position to travel. One day it could be that they are not willing to risk to remain away from their families," he said.

The fleet director of d'Amico Società di Navigazione said he usually received 100-150 job applications on LinkedIn, but had received just two for cargoships during the pandemic.

He said many seafarers were "running away" from the industry out of fears the risks were too great.

Mr d'Amico said the industry was less prepared for the crew-change crisis since than it was in past decades when contracts were longer. "We need to find a solution," he said.

Other speakers commented that the risk of deterring new talent had been present for 20 years.

Anglo-Eastern Univan Group chief executive Bjorn Hojgaard told the forum his group had done nearly 1,500 crew changes in the past three weeks, but more than 5,000 were still due for relief.

Seafarers' home countries and ports had to be open and flights available, he said. But there were still "major bottlenecks". Lack of quarantine facilities in home countries was also problem, he added.

Mr d'Amico said his company was "still in full emergency mode" despite recent movement of crews. He said his main concern was for those ashore waiting to board not earning money. "In countries like India where one seafarer provides food for 10 families this is a giant disaster," he said.

International Chamber of Shipping secretary-general Guy Platten said bureaucratic hurdles such as visa requirements remained sticking points and called for "co-ordinated political action" by governments. Only about 25%-30% of needed crew changes were taking place.

International Transport Workers' Federation general secretary Stephen Cotton said lack of flights and visa and testing requirements had slowed progress. He said the crisis had shown the industry could put its other issues aside, but crews should not have to rely on the loyalty of their employers alone.

Cyprus' deputy shipping minister, Natasa Pilides, said her government had not required visas for crews and provided tests at the airport and hotels for quarantine.

Other industry groups have added to calls for action on crew change. The UK Chamber of Shipping has written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling for UK a virtual global summit on the problem.

"In the early stages of the lockdown, the UK government set an excellent example to the rest of the world by pledging to keep ports open for crew changes and shore leave. We need to see other countries reciprocate and we need this to happen now," chief executive Bob Sanguinetti said.

The Container Ship Safety Forum also echoed calls on governments to allow crew changes, saying they could not be delayed indefinitely.

Shipping struggles to overcome political inertia as crew change crisis starts to bite

By Richard Meade

10 Jun 2020

A diplomatic battle is underway to win over international political support for crew change plans. Slow implementation from governments unwilling or unable to overcome bureaucratic blockages has left the vast majority of seafarers stranded at sea or stuck at home due to travel restrictions

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