

RNI 53380/91

AUGUST 2025

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OWNED, PUBLISHED AND PRINTED BY:

Sangeeta Nangia, at E-26, Greater Kailash Enclave Part One, New Delhi 110048, India.

PRINTED AT:

US Graphics Pvt. Ltd.,
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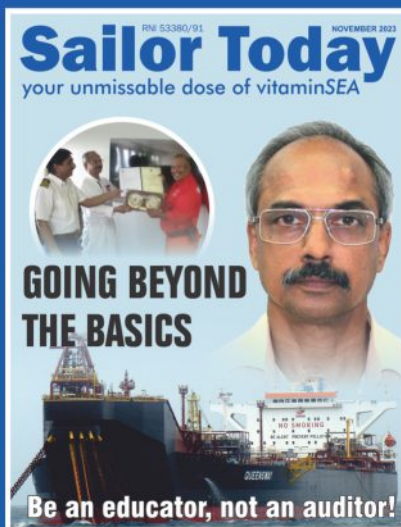
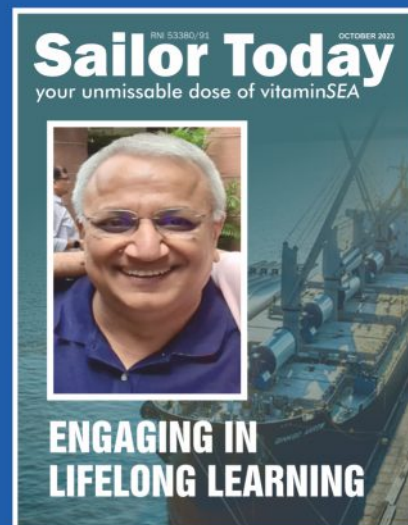
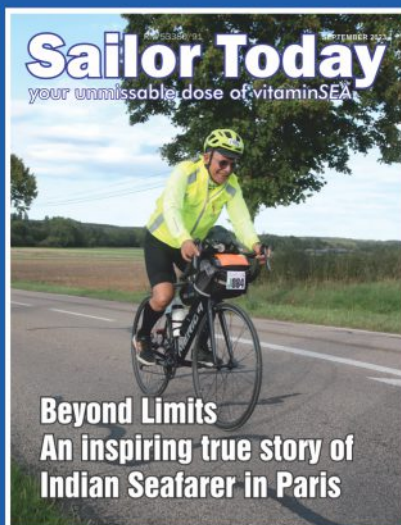
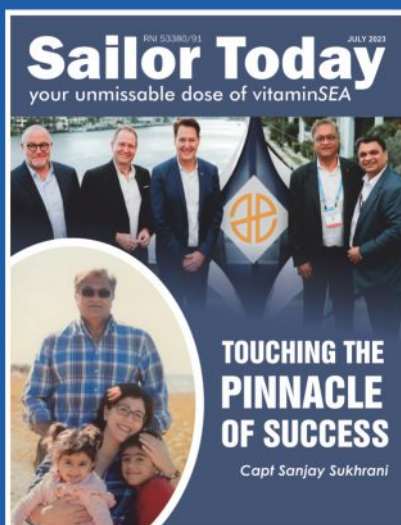
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The Role of Oral Examinations in STCW Certification for Second Mates: Evaluating Necessity and Exploring Alternatives

(Revised Edition: August 2025)

By Capt. Ramji S Krishnan
Sloan Fellow, London Business School



INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving world of maritime operations, where the safety of crews, vessels, and the environment hinges on the competence of seafarers, the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) framework stands as a global cornerstone. For aspiring Second Mates in India, this journey to certification has long included a rite of passage: the oral examination. Mandated by the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), these orals are intended to probe beyond rote knowledge, delving into practical skills and decision-making abilities. Yet, as the industry sails into a digital era, questions about their true value are surfacing like flotsam.

Are oral exams still essential, or do they represent an outdated anchor holding back progress? This article navigates these waters, examining the current role of orals in India's STCW certification process, weighing their merits against their pitfalls, and charting a course toward innovative alternatives. Drawing on global comparisons, fresh insights from stakeholders, and the latest DGS reforms—including the Examination Reform Pilot launched in April 2025 and Exit Exam Version 2.0 rolled out in May—we advocate for a streamlined, equitable system that aligns with modern maritime demands without sacrificing standards.

The purpose of the oral examinations is to check your competency, confidence and practical knowledge."

— CINEC Campus Guide to Master's Oral Examination (2020)

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THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF ORAL EXAMINATIONS IN INDIA

The landscape of oral examinations in India today is one of tradition clashing with practical realities. To earn their Second Mate certification, candidates must conquer both written tests and these face-to-face “interrogations,” where examiners assess not just facts but the ability to apply them in real-world scenarios. However, this system is fraught with challenges that have prompted DGS to embark on ambitious digital overhauls in 2025. Foremost among these is the chronic shortage of qualified examiners, a bottleneck that leaves hopeful seafarers adrift for months awaiting slots. Recent DGS circulars from 2024 and 2025 paint a vivid picture of this administrative quagmire, where delays pile up like cargo in a congested port, burdening both candidates and the system. In response, the Examination Reform Pilot, initiated in April 2025 at the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) in Noida, has introduced digital question papers and secure scanning of answer sheets. Early reports from June 2025 indicate this has slashed processing times, offering a glimpse of how technology could untangle these knots and pave the way for broader implementation by 2028.

Compounding the issue is the overload on existing examiners, who juggle heavy workloads leading to hasty assessments and uneven grading—much like a ship

navigating without a reliable steering gear. Accessibility adds another layer of turbulence: seafarers from remote regions face daunting travel logistics and scheduling hurdles, while those educated in vernacular languages struggle to articulate complex concepts in English, the lingua franca of the seas. Yet, amid these storms, technological horizons are brightening. Computer-based testing promises instant scoring and feedback, reducing dependence on traditional orals. A prime example is Exit Exam Version 2.0, launched through Training Circular No. 22 of 2025 on May 13. This upgrade incorporates a centralized Virtual Monitoring System (VMS) for real-time proctoring, mandatory CCTV in exam halls—at a cost of about INR 19,500 per unit plus GST borne by Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs)—and a fortified question bank to ensure integrity. Frequent appeals for re-evaluations in DGS FAQs highlight lingering fairness concerns, fuelling the debate on whether orals are a help or a hindrance.

As highlighted in DGS Circular No. 31 of 2025, “The Directorate General of Shipping came to know of reported instances of Indian seafarers being offered certificates by unapproved private entities which are not commensurate with the training and assessment standards set by India as a leading maritime administration following a structured programme of examination, assessment and certification, in line with

Fraudulent agents have been offering ‘package’ of delivering course certificates issued by institutes that were not approved by the Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India, and the foreign CoC/CoP without any course being conducted... [such practices] undermine the fundamental principles and objectives of the STCW Convention.”

— DGS Circular No. 31 of 2025

the requirements of the STCW Convention." This underscores the broader implications for certification integrity amid ongoing reforms.

commitment, driven by perceptions of IMO compliance, though it grapples with accessibility issues for its vast seafarer population from rural areas, increasingly

Country	Oral Exams Retained?	Rationale	Outcomes/Challenges & Alternatives
UK (MCA)	Yes (online since 2023)	Assess OOW duties; historical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pass rates ~70-80%, subjectivity issues.Requires written tests and Notice of Eligibility (NoE) before orals to filter unprepared candidates.Updated MCA MIN 653 (2024) reinforces digital elements.
Philippines	Yes	IMO compliance perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High seafarer volume; rural accessibility barriers.Growing simulation use amid 2025 digital pushes.
US (USCG)	No (alternatives approved)	Competence via simulations/MCQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintains standards; NMC pre-approves alternatives per NVIC 18-14 (updated 2024).
New Zealand (MNZ)	Yes (final orals, alternatives encouraged)	Post-training competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stress-inducing; uses online quizzes, digital TRB logging.2024-2025 updates promote digital assessments per MNZ Guidelines (2024).
China (MSA)	Yes (blended)	Tradition and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Augments orals with simulators, computer-based tests; quality-oriented reforms via MSA MET Research (2024).

supplemented by simulations. Contrast this with the United States, where the Coast Guard (USCG) has boldly jettisoned orals in favour of approved alternatives like simulations and multiple-choice questions (MCQs), as outlined in NVIC 18-14 updated in 2024, proving that standards can hold firm without verbal trials. New Zealand's Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) strikes a hybrid balance, retaining final orals but

COMPARISON WITH COUNTRIES
RETAINING OR ADAPTING ORAL
EXAMS

Turning our gaze outward, a global comparison reveals a mosaic of approaches to oral exams, each shaped by history, necessity, and innovation. In the United Kingdom, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) clings to orals—now conducted online since 2023—to scrutinize Officer of the Watch (OOW) duties, rooted in a deep-seated tradition that ensures continuity in seafarer training. The Philippines echoes this

encouraging digital quizzes and Training Record Book (TRB) logging, with 2024-2025 updates pushing further into online assessments to ease stress. China, through its Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), blends tradition with tech, augmenting orals with simulators and computer-based tests for efficiency, as per recent MET research. These varied paths—summarized in the table below—illustrate that while historical precedent and regulatory interpretations keep orals afloat in some nations, alternatives are not only viable but thriving, offering India a compass for reform.

Simulator training forms a key part of mandatory training under IMO's STCW Convention, which establishes international standards for training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers." — International Maritime Organization (IMO), 2016

ADVANTAGES OF ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Proponents of oral examinations argue passionately for their enduring strengths, viewing them as a dynamic bridge between theory and the unpredictable realities of life at sea. They excel in testing communication skills, where a candidate's ability to clearly articulate responses mirrors the need for precise bridge-to-bridge coordination during voyages. Orals also thrust examinees into simulated high-pressure scenarios, honing problem-solving instincts that could mean the difference between calm waters and catastrophe. The immediacy of feedback allows examiners to dispel confusions on the spot, fostering deeper understanding, while their holistic nature uncovers nuances—like confidence and practical insight—that written tests might overlook.

As stated in the CINEC Campus guide, "The purpose of the oral examinations is to check your competency, confidence and practical knowledge." This encapsulates how orals truly gauge essential mariner qualities, making them a cherished tool in the toolkit for certifications like Second Mate.

DISADVANTAGES OF ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Yet, the tides of criticism are rising, amplified by 2025 stakeholder voices echoing through DGS social media and personal communications. Subjectivity looms large, with examiners' personal biases potentially skewing outcomes in these high-stakes encounters, eroding the

fairness that should underpin certifications. The sheer stress of the process—enduring long waits from 0945 to 1700 hours without sustenance—can capsize even the most prepared candidate's performance, an issue that scheduled slots, say from 1000 to 1350 hours with timed arrivals, might steady. Accessibility remains a formidable barrier, as geographic distances, rigid timetables, and language gaps isolate many, though online orals from home and bolstered pre-sea English training—now supported by RPSL online modules in Training Circular No. 14 of 2025—offer lifelines. Corruption, while diminished by mixed examiner panels and cross-regional assignments (like Mumbai surveyors evaluating Chennai hopefuls), still lurks in shadows, with post-exam question-sharing via informal groups undermining trust.

DGS has countered this head-on with Circular No. 31 of 2025, which warns, "Fraudulent agents have been offering 'package' of delivering course certificates issued by institutes that were not approved by the Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India, and the foreign CoC/CoP without any course being conducted." Such practices, it notes, "undermine the fundamental principles and objectives of the STCW Convention," highlighting the integrity risks that oral exams can exacerbate if not reformed.

THE CASE AGAINST ORAL EXAMINATIONS: REVISITING THE NEED FOR CHANGE

These shortcomings build a compelling case for charting away from orals in India's Second Mate certifications, a move that

AN EXAMPLE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE

To illustrate how these methods could replace oral exams for Second Mates while upholding STCW standards, consider a modular, digital pathway integrated into pre-sea or preparatory courses:

A candidate begins with a gamified online MCQ module on STCW Function 1 (COLREGS). Using a Duolingo-inspired platform, they complete adaptive quizzes on collision avoidance scenarios, earning digital badges for milestones (e.g., "Basic Rules Mastery" after 80% accuracy). Progress is logged via API to their Training Record Book (TRB), with immediate feedback via AI analytics identifying weak areas.

Next, they advance to computer-based testing (CBT) for Function 3 (Ship Operations), tackling scenario-based questions with timed responses. AI evaluates not just answers but decision-making patterns, flagging biases or inconsistencies for personalized remediation—reducing subjectivity inherent in orals.

The capstone involves a cloud-based simulator session (e.g., via affordable platforms like Wärtsilä's cloud tools). Here, the candidate navigates a virtual bridge crisis, with AI assessing performance metrics like communication efficacy and error rates. Upon success, they receive a micro-credential badge, verifiable via blockchain and endorsed by external examiners or MMD.

This sequence—MCQ for knowledge, CBT for application, AI-simulated scenarios for skills—culminates in a portfolio submission, audited by companies for employability. It eliminates oral stress, ensures objectivity, and scales via DGS's 2025 digital reforms, potentially boosting retention by 75% through immersion. Piloting this in 2026 could validate its STCW compliance, paving the way for oral phase-out.

wouldn't leave competency adrift. The USCG's success with simulations and MCQs under NVIC 18-14 demonstrates robust alternatives, while New Zealand's blended strategy provides a phased blueprint. DGS's 2025 momentum, from the Reform Pilot to Exit Exam upgrades, signals readiness for this shift. As of August 2025, orals endure—with September schedules freshly announced—but the call for acceleration grows louder.

In the words of the USCG guidelines, "Mariners may demonstrate achieving the standards of competence by completing the assessments in Enclosure (2), or an approved equivalent alternative." This flexibility illustrates how practical tests and approved experiences can replace orals without compromising STCW standards.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODS

Fortunately, a fleet of alternatives awaits, ready to steer assessments toward objectivity and inclusivity. These can anchor at pre-sea and preparatory courses for Second Mates and Navigational Watchkeeping

Officers (NWKO), scaling upward to Chief Mates and Masters, with external examiners ensuring impartiality and MMD integration weaving a unified net. Simulation-based assessments stand out, immersing candidates in virtual storms via advanced tech that objectively scores technical prowess and soft skills. Traditional on-premise simulators come at a steep cost of INR 50-100 lakhs per unit, but cloud-based alternatives—offered by providers like Wärtsilä and Kongsberg Digital—dramatically lower this barrier through subscription models, often starting at \$5,000-20,000 USD annually for institutional access, eliminating hardware dependencies and enabling remote, device-agnostic training. AI-enhanced simulators, inspired by China's Unity-based models, automate evaluations for efficiency, with cloud versions further reducing costs by up to 70-90% via pay-as-you-go pricing. These can be offset through DGS subsidies or company recruitment tie-ins, making them ideal for STCW compliance in scenario-based testing. Portfolios digitize learning journeys, encouraging reflection with blockchain safeguards against tampering, as seen in New Zealand. Project-based learning fosters teamwork and critical thinking through hands-on tasks, while digital badges and micro-credentials embed into TRBs, validating milestones and enhancing job prospects via company-monitored audits. Authentic assessments mirror STCW's real-world ethos, and gamified online MCQs—modelled on Duolingo for Functions like COLREGS, cargo handling, and ship operations—engage learners with badges and API-linked TRB tracking. AI and machine learning tools shine here too: chatbots tuned to STCW simulate unbiased

questioning, and analytics tailor education, borrowing from medical fields.

Even verification platforms, bolstered by Circular 31, use AI and blockchain to slash corruption by 20-30%, per UPCEA studies. The UK's pre-filtering via writtens and Notices of Eligibility streamlines by weeding out the unprepared early. As noted in a JMIR study on AI in medical education, "While AI's benefits in medicine include eliminating human bias and enhancing pattern recognition and decision-making, its drawbacks, such as the inability to provide warmth and empathy to patients and absorb the wisdom of human educators, should not be underestimated." This insight supports AI-driven alternatives in maritime assessments, where bias reduction is key.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND MITIGATIONS

Implementing these isn't without rough seas: costs for traditional simulators remain high, though cloud-based options mitigate this with flexible subscriptions (e.g., INR 4-16 lakhs annually for mid-sized programs); CCTV setups (INR 19,500 per unit from Circular 22) demand subsidies and IMEI partnerships; regulatory nods can mirror USCG approvals; assessor training via online modules builds capacity; and scalability starts with 2026 pre-sea pilots, leveraging MMD Noida's April 2025 triumphs for a 2028 horizon.

CROSS-SECTOR RESEARCH

Insights from beyond the maritime horizon reinforce this voyage. Recent 2024-2025 research in medicine validates AI and

Reform/Practice	DGS (India, 2025)	Global Comparison (e.g., UK MCA, USCG)
Digital Exams	Exit Exam V2.0 with proctoring/CCTV	UK MCA's online orals since 2023; USCG's simulation-based alternatives
Fraud Prevention	Circular 31/2025 verification mandates	IMO's emphasis on mutual recognition under STCW Reg I/10
Refresher Assessments	Discontinued Exit Exams (Circular 04/2025)	New Zealand's digital TRB logging

web-based tools for minimizing bias (JMIR), education champions simulations and portfolios (Educational Researcher, 2025), and credentialing sectors report 10-20% employability gains from badges (UPCEA). The table below juxtaposes DGS strides with global peers, highlighting synergies.

From the JMIR analysis, "The sustained evolution of AI has resulted in a paradigm shift in medical practice, transitioning from traditional methods to digital health care, with AI finding applications in diverse realms of medical and health care." This parallels the potential shift in maritime education toward AI alternatives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the winds of change are blowing against oral exams for India's Second Mates, propelled by their inherent flaws—subjective judgments, anxiety-inducing waits (mitigable by slots), access inequities (eased by online formats and English modules), and persistent integrity gaps (curbed by Circular 31). A refreshed framework, STCW-aligned and equitable, beckons. Rollouts at foundational levels, with scalability and MMD harmony, draw from proven models: US MCQ-simulations, New Zealand's digital hybrids, China's augmented tech, and UK's filters. Cross-

sector validations—from AI in health to educational simulations—bolster the case for gamified tests, cost-managed simulators (especially cloud-based for affordability), and personalized AI. Surmountable hurdles like expenses and training yield to strategic alliances and pilots, with TRB oversight ensuring seaworthiness. Embracing this, India can captain maritime education's future, fostering access, banishing corruption, and equipping seafarers for tomorrow's voyages—emerging as a beacon in STCW innovation.

SUMMARY OF KEY IMPROVEMENTS

Key improvements under DGS 2025 include digital papers and Exit Exam V2.0 as alternative proofs, fortified TRB audits, realistic costings for tech (with cloud simulators reducing barriers), and a timeline from 2026 pilots to 2028 rollout.

CALL TO ACTION

The call to action is clear: DGS must broaden the 2025 Reform Pilot into 2026 pre-sea trials of these alternatives, weaving in Circular 31 verifications, and audit for STCW fidelity and career boosts. This charts the path to nationwide adoption and the sunset of orals by 2028.

PRACTICE IS THE TOUGHEST PART OF LEARNING, AND TRAINING IS THE CORE OF TRANSFORMATION

- Capt. Robert Vaz, Chief Operating Officer, Navguide Solutions

The vessel "Atlantic Beauty" was en route to New York when a fire broke out. Reports indicate there was complete confusion and chaos among the ship's crew; however, the fire was extinguished thanks to a firefighting tug a few miles away. As with all incidents, the vessel was subject to investigation and scrutiny. An incident investigation was carried out, involving several visits to the ship by managers, P & I clubs, third-party inspectors, as well as flag and classification inspectors. A year passed, and these inspections decreased; communication from the office also diminished. Gradually, crew members were replaced after completing their contracts, routines returned to normal, and the vessel resumed regular operations.

Capt. James, a senior Master, was in the galley reviewing the provisions inventory. All the crew members were in the mess room enjoying their coffee break but were unaware that the Master was in the galley.

The Bosun said, "Guys, today we will finish our work by 1500hrs because at 1600hrs we have our weekly safety drills." There was a lot of laughter and chit-chat as one AB

said, "Bosun, no big deal, we just need to show up with our lifejackets, and once the headcount is done and some casual talk, the drill will be called off."

This statement caught Capt. James's attention, he listened closely to the conversation. When the oiler said, 'Well, today a couple of engineers and the fitter will not attend the drill as they are working on an auxiliary engine.'

The mess man said that, after the abandon ship muster, the chief cook and I will also leave since we are preparing a special dinner this evening. The bosun was heard grumbling that these drills are a pain because only the deck crew has put all the equipment back. It's just extra work, and we rarely learn anything; it's the same standard fire and boat drill, and sometimes the safety video. Once the lights are off in the smoke room, most crew members don't even pay attention and actually doze.

By now, Capt. James was fully energized. He quietly slipped out of the galley through the officers' mess so no one would notice.

He went to his cabin and called a meeting with the Chief Engineer and the Chief Officer.

He relayed all the dialogues he heard in the messroom to both the Chief Engineer and the Chief Officer, who lowered their heads in embarrassment. Capt. James reminded the senior officers of the fire incident that happened a year ago. He said, "We must be the change." So, let's work hard together to ensure our drills are done correctly and will help us prepare and feel confident in case of an emergency. Both the Chief Officer and the Chief Engineer agreed, and it was unanimously decided to postpone the drill to a later date since the Chief Engineer had some urgent ongoing jobs on the auxiliary engines.

That's when Capt. James said, "Practice is the toughest part of learning, and training is the core of transformation." So let's get back to the drawing board and reflect on what we are doing wrong and why the crew is not taking the drill seriously.

After an hour of discussion, they identified several reasons.

Listed in no particular order, here are some key points.

- Drills were very standard, no element of realism or challenge to the crew
- Drills were not planned or prepared
- There was a lack of coordination and communication between departments
- During the drills, leadership standards were low, so most of the crew were very casual about them.

- The catering staff is always given an allowance, so they seldom attend drills.
- In fact, all the officers, engineers, and catering department dispersed after the drill, leaving the four deck ratings to tidy up the decks, lifeboats, and return all the equipment to its proper places.
- There was little evaluation or feedback; only a basic assessment was conducted over the walkie-talkie, and that was it.
- Basically, the drills were merely a tick-box exercise since it was a mandatory requirement; the drill sheet and logbook were filled out specifically for third-party inspectors.

Capt. James thanked the senior officers for their honest feedback. That evening, all the ship's staff gathered for a meeting and discussed these points. Once again, Capt. James reflected on the fire incident from a year ago. He reminded the crew that, in case of an incident, only the ship's staff as a team will have to handle it, and drills are the best way to improve. Capt. James also explained why it is vital to conduct drills regularly and as realistically as possible.



Every crew member agreed, and the senior crew members confirmed they would do their best to ensure the drills were carried out correctly.

The next day, the Captain rings the general alarm and announces an enclosed space drill. All crew members muster, and various teams spring into action. All the reporting and timings were recorded. The drill sheet is completed, and after the drill is called off, all crew assemble for a debrief. The briefing is excellent, as many crew members come up with innovative ideas.

Every crew member and Capt. James looked visibly happy and motivated.

CONCLUSION

We have just witnessed how the entire crew's mindset and attitude shifted from being uninterested and not participating to being involved and coming up with innovative ideas during safety drills.

Safety drills are crucial because they prepare us for emergencies. Since these drills simulate real situations, ship staff become well-prepared, which boosts their confidence in using and trusting their equipment. They also

develop muscle memory. In an actual emergency, they will react quickly and work together with coordinated actions and clear communication. Navguide Solutions offers an effective training course on how to conduct safety drills successfully. Being prepared is the best way to protect against unexpected emergencies and the unpredictable nature of the sea.

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THE TALE OF THE SLEEPY SHIP AND THE MISCHIEVOUS BALLAST WATER

(A Bedtime Story for Seafarers, Regulators, and Curious Landlubbers)

Author:

CAPT GAJANAN KARANJIKAR

US based accident investigator



Prologue - Once Upon a Tide...

Once upon a tide (not a time), there was a hardworking ship called MV Snoozy Whale (name changed). She sailed the seven seas bravely, carrying cargoes of coal, grain, and steel from one continent to another. But she had one cheeky little secret: she also carried millions of stowaways in her belly.

No, not pirates. Not smugglers. Not even mischievous cadets sneaking snacks.

Her ballast tanks were home to tiny plankton, fish larvae, bacteria, and microscopic organisms. They travelled the world without visas, passports, or return tickets. For them, ballast tanks were the best budget cruise ever invented.

But unlike most tourists, these little critters could wreak havoc wherever they landed.

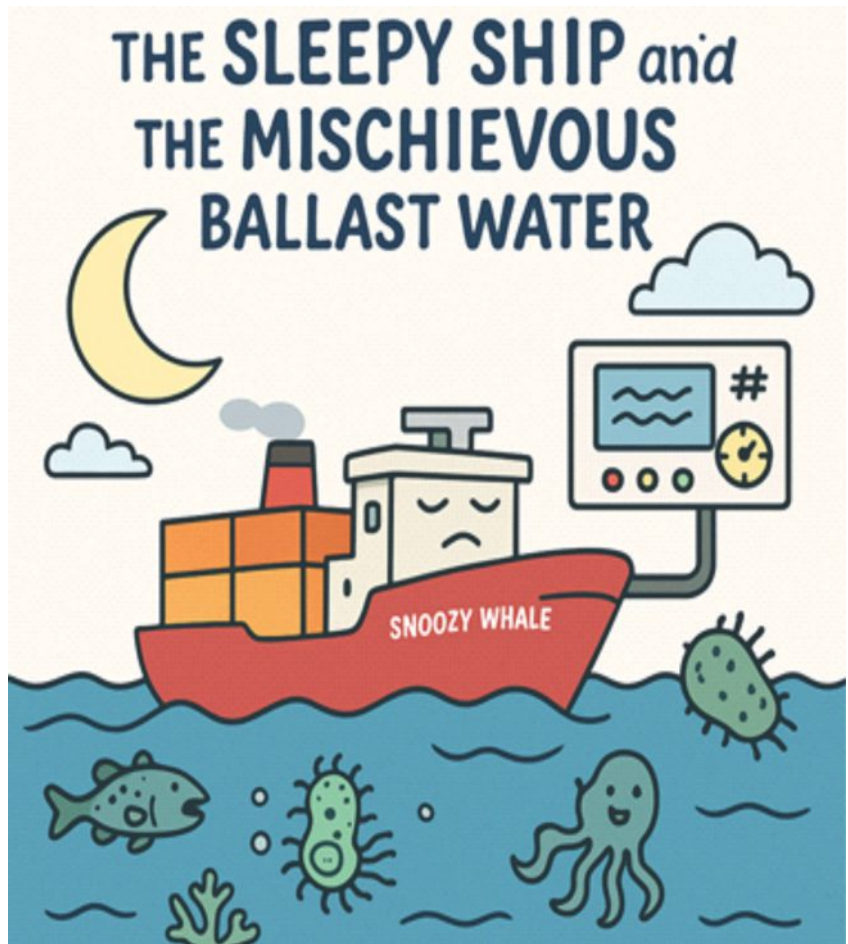
The Problem Nobody Saw Coming

Long ago, ships would load seawater into their ballast tanks to stay stable when not carrying cargo. It seemed harmless - after all, it's just water, right?

Wrong. That "water" carried a secret army of organisms. And when discharged at the next port, those organisms suddenly found themselves in new homes where they didn't belong.

- A crab from Japan could set up shop in Baltimore.
- Zebra mussels hitchhiked to the Great Lakes and clogged pipes.
- Plankton carried across oceans destroyed fisheries.
- Some tanks even carried cholera bacteria to new regions.

The oceans became highways for invasive species. For local fishermen, it was like waking up to find their neighborhood replaced by alien invaders with no natural predators.



The Wise Council of the Seas

Enter the International Maritime Organization (IMO) - the United Nations body in charge of keeping shipping safe and sustainable. In 2004, IMO adopted the **Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention**.

The bedtime rulebook was simple:

1. Ships must treat ballast water before discharging it.
(No more raw "aquarium dumping.")
2. Ships must install Ballast Water Treatment Systems (BWTS).

(Think of it as a ship's toothbrush for cleaning its insides.)

3. Ships must record everything in the Ballast Water Record Book.

(Because, as every cadet knows, “If it isn’t written down, it didn’t happen.”)

By 2017, the convention came into force, and by 2024 almost every international vessel was expected to comply.

Why the Rules Matter

From an investigator's desk, I can tell you - these aren't bureaucratic gimmicks. They matter.

- **Protecting Ecosystems:** Preventing alien species from destroying native habitats.
- **Safeguarding Fisheries:** A single plankton species can crash a fishery and ruin coastal economies.
- **Public Health:** Untreated ballast can spread waterborne diseases.
- **Avoiding Fines:** The U.S. Coast Guard and other regulators impose hefty penalties for non-compliance - sometimes in millions.

For seafarers, it means more work. For shipowners, it means investment. For the planet, it means survival.

The Case of “Cadet Bubbles”

As an incident investigator, I've seen mistakes that would make Neptune facepalm.

One of my favorite “cases” is what I call **The Case of Cadet Bubbles**.

MV *Snoozy Whale* was alongside a U.S. Gulf terminal. Regulations were crystal clear:

ballast water had to be treated before discharge.

But Cadet Bubbles — a bright, overconfident lad — thought he'd save time. Instead of running the ballast water treatment system (which takes hours and lots of monitoring), he simply opened the discharge valve and let untreated water gush out.

He figured: *“It’s just water. Who’ll notice?”*

Well, the U.S. Coast Guard noticed. They always notice.

The discharge sample revealed plankton from a faraway ocean, which had no business entering Mississippi waters.

- The ship was detained.
- Owners faced six-figure fines.
- Charterers were furious.
- And Cadet Bubbles? He learned that ballast water is not “just water.”

The incident became a classroom lesson: **shortcuts sink reputations.**

The Magical Tools (BWTS)

Modern ships now have Ballast Water Treatment Systems (BWTS), which act like magical filters and sterilizers.

- Some zap organisms with **ultraviolet light**.
- Some use **electrochlorination**.
- Some simply filter and disinfect with chemicals.

Each has its quirks.

- Too much sediment in water? The filter clogs.
- Wrong salinity? UV lamps struggle.
- Cadet forgets to calibrate sensors? Entire system fails compliance.

Operating BWTS is not glamorous. It requires discipline, record-keeping, and understanding the manufacturer's manual (yes, the entire manual, not just the first three pages).

The Investigator's Nightmares

In my line of work, I've found common seafarer mistakes that keep investigators like me awake:

1. **Bypassing the System:** "We'll just pretend we ran it." (Until inspectors show up.)
2. **Bad Record Keeping:** Writing log entries after the fact. (Easy to spot during audits.)
3. **Improper Maintenance:** UV lamps not replaced, filters clogged. (Leads to non-compliance.)
4. **Crew Not Trained:** Cadets pressing buttons without knowing consequences.

Each slip can cost the shipowner dearly — not just in fines, but in lost reputation.

Turning Compliance into Culture

Here's the positive side: when crews understand why ballast water treatment matters, it transforms shipboard culture.

- Seafarers feel proud protecting marine life.

- Shipowners sleep better knowing they're safe from regulatory hammers.
- Inspectors become allies, not enemies.

And yes, cadets learn there's more to ballast than opening valves.

A Bedtime Moral for Seafarers

So, dear sailor, before you rest your weary head at anchor, remember:

- **Run the BWTS** - It's your ship's toothbrush.
- **Log everything properly** - Even Cinderella kept her receipts.
- **Don't cut corners** - Regulators have sharper eyes than fairy godmothers.
- **Stay trained** - Manuals are boring, but fines are scarier.

Because someday, when your grandchildren ask:

"Grandpa, did you fight pirates?"

You can proudly reply:

"No, kiddo. I fought plankton - and I won!"

Epilogue – Sweet Dreams, Clean Seas

And so *MV Snoozy Whale* continued her voyages, now wiser, cleaner, and proud of her ballast tanks. The plankton stowaways stayed home. The oceans sighed in relief. And Cadet Bubbles learned to always, always read the manual.

The sea slept peacefully, the shipowners slept soundly, and even the inspectors had sweet dreams.

DSWA MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY WITH AWARDS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT



A DECADE OF DSWA'S LOVE, CARE, AND UNITY SHINES THROUGH

Ten years ago, a handful of passionate seafarers in Dehradun came together with a simple idea — to create a community where mariners and their families could find strength, support, and belonging. What began as a small initiative has now grown into the Dehradun Seafarers Welfare Association (DSWA), a formidable network of service, camaraderie, and shared dreams. This year, DSWA completed 10 memorable years, and the milestone was celebrated in style with members, families, and partners coming together for an unforgettable evening.

A DECADE OF SERVICE: DSWA CELEBRATES 10 GLORIOUS YEARS

The Dehradun Seafarers Welfare Association (DSWA) recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a grand gathering held in Dehradun. The event brought together members, their families, supporters, and well-wishers, and stood as a tribute to the spirit of unity that defines DSWA.

A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND SERVICE

Founded in 2015, DSWA has steadily grown into a close-knit association representing seafarers from Dehradun and the surrounding region. Over the past decade, the association has organized initiatives that encouraged healthy living, strengthened community bonds,





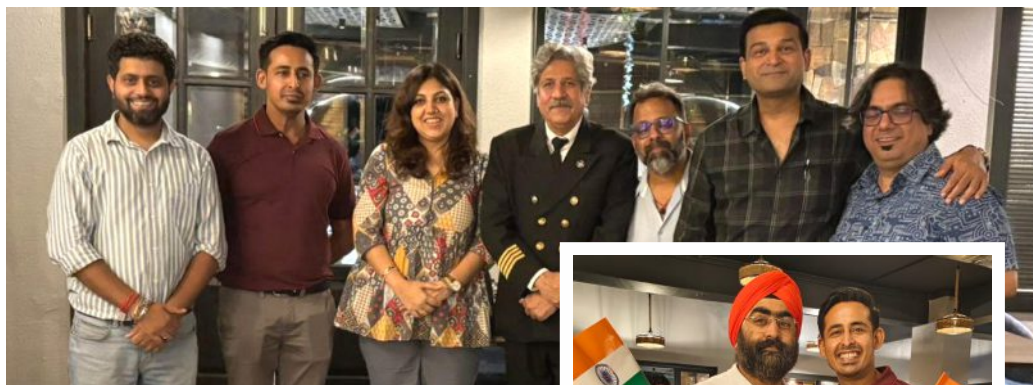
supported social causes, and guided the next generation of mariners. Behind every milestone are individuals who worked selflessly, often quietly, to take DSWA to where it proudly stands today.

RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

The highlight of the evening was the awards ceremony, where awards were given away by Capt. Sunil Nangia, Editor of Sailor Today, to individuals and institutions for their outstanding contributions to the association's journey.

- ***The Nautical Spirit Medal:*** Capt. Darpan Sharma and Mr. Gurpreet Singh — for initiating bike rides that promoted health, adventure, and camaraderie.
- ***The Mariners Star – Blood Donation Camp:*** Mr. Manan Oberoi and Mr. Saurabh Vaish — for organising the first blood donation camp, reflecting compassion and social responsibility.
- ***The Mariners Star – Events:*** Mr. Ankit Bahugana — for creating engaging social events that fostered fellowship.
- ***The Compass of Commitment:*** Capt. Tapan Raj and Mr. Rajeev Kaushik — for raising awareness on financial planning and pledge insurance, empowering members with knowledge for a secure future.
- ***The Sea-Chest Honour:*** Dr. Ankita Kukreti — for organising a dental camp for the underprivileged, extending DSWA's care beyond the maritime community.
- ***The Beacon of Service:*** Mr. Praneet Mehta and Mr. Manoj Devgan — for mentoring aspiring seafarers and guiding young minds toward the profession.
- ***The Sailors Pride Medallion:*** Capt. Prashant Rawat, Capt. Mandeep Sharma, Mr. Siddharth Sharma, and Mr. Shashank Mittal — for their selfless service in providing medical aid and food supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **The Ocean Heart Medallion:** Sailor Today and Zasha Maritime Academy — for recognising and supporting DSWA's mission.



FAMILIES AND SPONSORS AT THE HEART

The presence of families added warmth and joy to the celebration, reminding everyone that DSWA's journey has always been about more than seafarers alone — it is about the people who stand with them on shore. The event also expressed deep gratitude to sponsors — Tranquil Space, Tranquil Valley, and Client Ally — whose unwavering support made the celebration possible.

LOOKING AHEAD

In a heartfelt vote of thanks, the DSWA management acknowledged the collective spirit that has carried the association forward. "Your support, encouragement, and presence have been the driving force behind our achievements. As we step into the next decade, we look forward to continuing this journey together, building on our shared vision and accomplishments," they said.

The 10th Anniversary celebration was not just a commemoration of DSWA's past but also a reaffirmation of its future — a future anchored in togetherness, service, and the enduring pride of being part of the seafaring community.

OUR STRENGTH LIES IN UNITY - OF SEAFARERS, FAMILIES, AND THE COMMUNITY THAT STANDS WITH US.

DSWA @ 10 — QUICK FACTS

ESTABLISHED: 2015, DEHRADUN

Mission: Welfare, unity and guidance for seafarers of Doon

Celebration: 10th Anniversary event held recently

Guests: Members, families, sponsors and well-wishers

Awards Presented By: Capt. Sunil Nangia, Editor, Sailor Today

HONOURS CONFERRED

- Nautical Spirit Medal → Capt. Darpan Sharma, Mr. Gurpreet Singh
- Mariners Star → Mr. Manan Oberoi, Mr. Saurabh Vaish, Mr. Ankit Bahugana
- Compass of Commitment → Capt. Tapan Raj, Mr. Rajeeve Kaushik
- Sea-Chest Honour → Dr. Ankita Kukreti
- Beacon of Service → Mr. Praneet Mehta, Mr. Manoj Devgan
- Sailors Pride Medallion → Capt. Prashant Rawat, Capt. Mandeep Sharma, Mr. Siddharth Sharma, Mr. Shashank Mittal
- Ocean Heart Medallion → Sailor Today, Zasha Maritime Academy

Event Partners: Tranquil Space, Tranquil Valley, Client Ally



COLUMBIA GROUP AND PAN MARINE GROUP JOIN FORCES TO LAUNCH COLUMBIA PAN MARINE SHIP MANAGEMENT EGYPT

Columbia Group, a global leader in integrated maritime services, proudly announces the establishment of Columbia Pan Marine Ship Management Egypt, a new joint venture with long-standing partner Pan Marine Shipping Services, one of Egypt's most respected maritime solutions providers.

The new entity will serve as the official office in Egypt, offering the full spectrum of services provided by Columbia Shipmanagement and the wider Columbia Group. This strategic move marks a significant milestone in Columbia Group's continued expansion across key maritime regions and further deepens its commitment to supporting the

development of the Egyptian maritime industry.

"We are delighted to formalise our partnership in Egypt with Pan Marine" said Philippos Ioulianos, Columbia Group Director of Energy and Renewables. "Egypt has always been a country of immense maritime and energy importance, and this new venture allows us to work more closely with local talent and institutions, delivering world-class crew management, training, technical services and energy solutions."

Pan Marine and Columbia have been actively collaborating since 2023. Since then, the partnership has delivered high-impact results across various areas:

- **Enhanced Crew Management and Training:** Customised training programmes have been introduced for Egyptian seafarers, leveraging Columbia's global expertise to ensure compliance with international regulations and the highest operational standards.
- **Seafarer Educational Programmes:** Tailored initiatives have been launched to educate young Egyptians on career opportunities within the maritime industry, with a focus on skill-building, safety, and operational excellence.
- **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns:** Joint recruitment efforts are actively attracting top Egyptian maritime talent through a combination of local outreach and digital platforms, leveraging on Pan Marine's local knowledge and access to qualified and motivated Egyptian professionals.
- **Emission Control and Environmental Compliance:** In alignment with global sustainability goals, the partnership has introduced training modules focused on emission control technologies and environmental regulations, including IMO 2020 sulphur cap compliance and energy efficiency measures. Crew members are now trained in the use of alternative fuels, and emissions monitoring systems, ensuring vessels operate within the latest environmental standards.
- **Advancements in Ship Management Systems:** The collaboration has also

driven the adoption of cutting-edge ship management technologies. These include integrated fleet management platforms, predictive maintenance tools, and real-time performance monitoring systems. These innovations not only enhance operational efficiency but also contribute to safer and more sustainable maritime operations.

Columbia Group is also leveraging digitalisation to support decision-making, increase fuel efficiency, and streamline compliance processes across the fleet. By integrating smart technologies and data analytics into day-to-day operations, the Group is setting a new benchmark for tech-enabled maritime services.

"We are excited to take our partnership with Columbia Group to the next level," said Marwan El Shazly, Vice President Marketing and Contracts of Pan Marine Group. "This joint venture is not only a recognition of Egypt's seafaring strength but a real opportunity to build sustainable careers for Egyptian maritime professionals and to raise the bar for maritime services within the region."

This expansion aligns with Columbia Group's commitment to localisation, talent development, and sustainability, bringing global maritime and energy expertise closer to Egyptian seafarers, shipowners and energy stakeholders. The joint venture strengthens Egypt's role as a bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia, not only for shipping but also as critical hub for the development of new energy solutions and technologies.



Indian Register of Shipping and DMECA Host “Maritime Workforce 2030: Pathways, Progress & Preparedness” Seminar to Spotlight Seafarer Career Pathways

Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), in collaboration with the DMET MERI Ex-Cadets Association (DMECA), successfully hosted a seminar titled “Maritime Workforce 2030: Pathways, Progress & Preparedness – Shaping Future Leaders for a Sustainable Maritime Sector” in Mumbai. The seminar brought together senior maritime leaders, educators, and industry professionals to discuss creation of skilled, future-ready workforce and elevate the seafaring profession.

In his keynote address, Arun Sharma, Executive Chairman, IRS emphasised the urgent need to uplift the profile of seafarers, acknowledging their vital role in global trade and maritime safety. He urged

stakeholders to position seafaring as a prestigious and aspirational career, not only at sea but also as a stepping stone to leadership roles ashore.

The keynote also called for the inclusion of Marine Engineering programmes at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), equating the need for maritime engineering excellence with India's world-class aviation engineering and technology education.

The seminar featured two dynamic panel discussions:

Panel 1: Beyond the Seas – Career Pathways Post-Seafaring, focused on building structured career transitions for



seafarers, exploring opportunities in ship management, classification societies, ship finance, marine insurance, and technology-driven roles.

Panel 2: Future Skills for Maritime 2030 – AI, Sustainability & Beyond: Examined emerging skillsets required to navigate decarbonisation, AI integration,

digitalisation, and sustainability, emphasising the need for workforce adaptability and continuous learning.

“Seafarers are the lifeblood of maritime trade. By elevating maritime education, integrating marine engineering into premier institutes, India can strengthen its talent pipeline and enhance its global maritime leadership.” said Mr. Arun Sharma, Executive Chairman, Indian Register of Shipping.

Mr. Mudit Mehrotra, Secretary DMECA said “The seminar reinforces DMECA's commitment to workforce development, knowledge sharing, and strengthening India's position as a global maritime hub, aligned with Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision, and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives”.



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THE ROLE OF MARITIME CHARITIES SPOTLIGHTED AT LISW25; CAPT KUBA SZYMANSKI ANNOUNCED AS KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The vital role maritime charities play within the industry will be discussed on the opening day of London International Shipping Week 2025 (LISW25).

Taking place on Monday 15th September, the session is titled 'Serving a Purpose – the vital role of maritime charities for the shipping industry' and the organisers are delighted to announce that Captain Kuba Szymanski, Secretary General of InterManager will be the keynote speaker.

The panel discussion brings together this year's four chosen LISW25 maritime charity partners: the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB), Project Connect and the Sir Thomas Lipton Foundation.

Internationally-recognised mariner Captain Sir Ian McNaught, President of the MNWB, will host the event.

Capt Szymanski is well-known as an outspoken campaigner for the welfare of seafarers, and says he's honoured to deliver the keynote speech.

"It is vital maritime charities are well supported by the rest of the industry, now more than ever. Seafarers are the lifeblood

of the maritime industry, which in turn gives the world the ability to trade and function. It's up to all of us in the industry to make sure that our own people are well looked after."

He added: "I am delighted to deliver the keynote speech at this session and to hear everyone's ideas on what they can do to help."

The free panel discussion will take place at Norton Rose Fulbright (Design Lab Ground Floor), 3 More London Riverside, London, SE1 2AQ on 15th September from 10am to 11am.





INTERNATIONAL MARITIME INSTITUTE GREATER NOIDA SIGNS MOU WITH INSTITUTE OF MARINE ENGINEERS (INDIA) TO LAUNCH A NEW STUDENT CHAPTER

Greater Noida, 23 June 2025 — The International Maritime Institute (IMI), Greater Noida, proudly announces the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute of Marine Engineers (India) (IME(I)), marking the formal launch of a new IME(I) Student Chapter at the institute.

IME(I) is India's leading professional body for marine engineers, known for advancing maritime education, technical excellence, and industry engagement nationwide. Membership with IME(I) offers students and professionals a vital platform for networking, research, and staying well-informed on global advancements in marine engineering.

The MoU was signed in the presence of distinguished representatives including Mr

David Birwadkar, Chairman of the IME(I) Mumbai branch, Captain Saurabh Varshney, Head of Institute, IMI, and Mr Rajeev Sarang, Head of Sub-Committee, IME(I) Mumbai Branch and General Manager, Fleet Management Limited.

A WEALTH OF RESOURCES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The newly established IME(I) Student Chapter at IMI Greater Noida marks a significant step in enriching the academic and professional journey of marine engineering cadets.

Cadets will benefit from access to the IME(I) e-Library, which offers an extensive collection of maritime learning materials and technical publications. They will also enjoy discounted rates on advanced



maritime courses after graduation, encouraging continuous professional development. The chapter facilitates mentorship from experienced marine engineers and provides invitations to exclusive seminars, webinars, and industry events—ensuring students stay informed about the latest trends and technologies.

Additionally, students traveling to Mumbai for exams or training can access subsidised hostel facilities, and those working on innovative projects may receive funding support and opportunities to publish technical papers. This collaboration bridges classroom learning with real-world maritime experience, equipping students with the skills, exposure, and confidence needed to thrive in the global shipping industry.

Mr Rajeev Sarang said: "The establishment

of this students' chapter opens a gateway for young marine engineers to empower themselves with the tools, mentorship, and the exposure they need to thrive in a fast-changing sector. "

A COMMITMENT TO MARITIME INNOVATION

In March 2025, The Caravel Group acquired IMI – a strategic investment in shaping the future of maritime education. IMI remains committed to nurturing highly skilled officers through its pre-sea programmes. The IMI ensures its graduates are equipped to lead in a rapidly evolving maritime landscape with offerings that include advanced simulator training, digital navigation, alternative fuels, and sustainability-driven operations.





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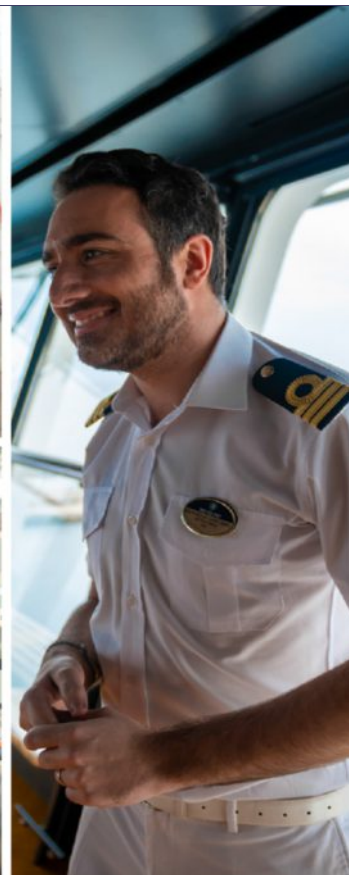
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1st Electrical Engineer

License: Valid III/6

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Electrician

License: Valid III/7

Preferred Experience: Similar experience on cruise ships or passenger vessels

Fitter

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