



IGP&I

ACT 5

USING THE
MASTER'S
OVERRIDING
AUTHORITY

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This guidance document has been developed as a learning aid and may be used to facilitate discussion on board. This document can be used in conjunction with the mooring animation produced by the International Group of P&I Clubs.



- According to the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, the company should ensure that the Safety Management System (SMS) operating on board the vessel contains a clear statement emphasising the Master's authority.
- The company should establish in the SMS that the Master **has the overriding authority and the responsibility to make decisions with regard to safety and pollution prevention** and to request the company's assistance as may be necessary.
- Company leaders, in addition to the Designated Person Ashore (DPA), should be expected to support Masters when this special authority has been used in legitimate circumstances.
- Leaders and shore managers can proactively assure Masters that they will be supported, in accordance with the SMS and without the threat of consequence.
- This authority afforded to Masters under The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) has been done so in recognition that Masters are experts in their field and should be trusted to make difficult decisions in the interest of safety.
- Whilst some Masters will have no reservation to exercise their overriding authority, others may be reluctant to, for fear of possible repercussions. Masters are encouraged to use their authority where there are genuine concerns as this could prevent a life changing incident from occurring.
- The Master should never give-in to external pressure when making safety-related decisions.

