

Effective Casualty Management

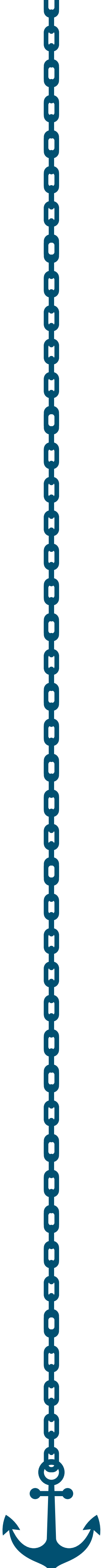


Effective casualty management requires communication and cooperation between different parties, including the owner, salvors, maritime administrations and insurers. In this session, the panel considered a fictional scenario of a 20,000 TEU container vessel in the channel which lost power, is listing 15-20 degrees and has containers starting to drop into the channel.

Of course, the priority at the beginning of any casualty is search and rescue plus preventing any pollution damage. Beyond this, incidents in the Channel tend to require an urgent response due to proximity to the shoreline and protected areas, potentially adverse weather conditions and depth of water.

Incidents that occur in the Channel have the potential to involve both the French and the UK Maritime Administrations. In the UK, the competent authority is the SOSREP (Secretary of State Representative for Maritime Salvage and Intervention) which is currently Stephan Hennig; in France, it is the Maritime Emergency Response Office of the Prefecture for the Channel and the North Sea.

Acknowledging the potential for incidents to affect both countries' territorial waters, the two offices developed an operational framework known as the "Mancheplan" in 1978. The Mancheplan has since expanded to include the Channel Islands, Belgium and Ireland. It defines responsibility for action and communication in the event of a casualty. The offices of each party meet at least twice year to discuss issues that might arise in the application of the Mancheplan.



On the insurance side, both the UK and the French Prefecture for the Northern Channel and Atlantic have signed a Casualty Response Memorandum of Understanding with the IGP&I. This memorandum identifies how best to facilitate the communication channels into the relevant holding P&I Club's casualty response team and provides the basis for joint training to be conducted by IGP&I with the authorities and associated agencies in connection with IGP&I Clubs' experience of large casualties.

In this particular scenario, the recovery of a large number of containers potentially scattered across a large area with dense seagoing traffic area could present difficulties for a salvor. Technology would be key in identifying the location and spread of lost containers. The containers are likely to present hazards to navigation in the channel necessitating liaison with the authorities to ensure the safety of maritime traffic. Communication with the owner and insurers would be essential to understand the contents of the containers, particularly those with the potential to cause environmental damage. There could be challenges in securing the appropriate salvage equipment in this area, particularly if floating cranes are otherwise occupied in the offshore industry or the incident involves a particularly large container ship for which a salvage operation has not yet been tested.

Effective casualty management requires communication and collaboration. We can best prepare for a serious casualty by building relationships across government and industry and understanding the appropriate lines of communication in advance.