

Crew comms critical in challenging times

Crew communications are widely accepted as an important element of seafarer welfare provision and vessel operators are now prioritising onboard systems to enable crew to keep in touch with home. The crisis in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the vital need for internet access and contact with home, while seafarer surveys regularly identify connectivity as a key factor in onboard happiness, recruitment and retention.

The IMO Council recently welcomed the proposal from industry groups and NGOs that a number of steps should be taken to reduce the suffering of seafarers and their families. These included that: "seafarers affected by the conflict should be allowed free access to communications with their families".

But what happens when a vessel is smaller, has little space for communications systems, or equipment budgets that are limited?

That's where compact and versatile systems come into their own. MarineStar E-lite is one such solution, delivering voice and data connectivity in a package that is specially optimised for smaller vessels. Voice services are delivered over Thuraya's MarineStar terminal while encrypted email provision comes via IEC Telecom's OneMailLite application.

Quick and easy to install, MarineStar E-Lite enables crew welfare communication as well as reliable access to navigation updates, port notifications, operational instructions, and continuous tracking and monitoring. With fleetwide management control, separate lines for corporate and crew communications, and flexible crew-calling plans, MarineStar E-Lite is a cost-effective alternative to radio and GSM.

Nabil Ben Soussia, Group CCO, President Asia, Middle East and CIS for IEC Telecom, observed: "No-one wants to be away from home at a time of crisis but for many seafarers that is an everyday fact of life. Being able



to keep in touch with family, friends and world news is essential to them and we are pleased to be able to play a part in delivering that communication, especially in these uncertain times."

In support of impacted seafarers and their families, IEC Telecom, which has a long history of helping humanitarian efforts, has also significantly reduced its call charges to Ukraine making it easier for vessel operators to provide crucial crew communications.

Mr Ben Soussia commented: "In today's competitive marketplace it is important to keep pace with workplace developments. Crew connectivity is now a must and something crew, especially younger members, expect. Technology has moved on and now that it is possible to meet those needs even on smaller vessels with limited space or budgets, why wouldn't you? After all, a happy crew is important to your vessel's operations." ●