

INFORMATION ITEM

Sponsor: Alan Sorum and POVTS Committee
Project number and name or topic: Maritime English and Miscommunication

1. **Description of agenda item:** Per Dr. Nicole Ziegler, “66% of all international ships have mixed nationality and multi-linguistic crews. The common language spoken on board vessels is unlikely to be the native language of the majority of crew. Communication failures is cited as one of the major factors in all incidents at sea. Many communicative difficulties are a result of cultural and pragmatic differences as well as linguistic failures. Lack of standardization in language and clear format for communication contribute to these failures.”

Dr. Nicole Ziegler is Associate Professor of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu, Hawaii. Her research focuses on how people learn second languages and how technology and task-supported approaches can facilitate language development. She is also interested in the role of language in the commercial shipping industry, focusing specifically on the development of authentic task-based materials based on the linguistic, communicative, and pragmatic needs of this unique context.

Dr. Ziegler made a presentation to the POVTS Committee on this subject after which the Committee recommended the same presentation be made to the Board.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** How human factors contribute to oil spill and maritime accidents is an area of interest the Council has monitored for many years. Improving communications, especially between bridge crews and marine pilots or the Coast Guard, is one area that could be improved through better knowledge of maritime English, particularly among native English speakers. Research in this field offers an opportunity to improve communications during normal maritime operations and during emergencies. Additionally, the increase of foreign flagged tankers used to export ANS crude oil from the Valdez Marine Terminal to overseas markets makes this information all the more valuable for assessing some of the risks Dr. Ziegler raises.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:** None.

4. **Summary of policy, issues, support or opposition:** A better understanding of maritime English between ship crews and native English speakers is area of potential interest to the Council in the area of addressing the human factors that contribute to accidents.

5. **Committee Recommendation:** The POVTS Committee recommended this presentation be made to the Board.

6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** None.

7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** None, item is for information only.

8. **Attachments:** None.