

Trying to save people, the environment and the economy: - It's easy to blame individuals when accidents happen



COLLECTION FOR SAFETY: Researchers from a number of countries have gathered at Bakkenteigen to try to reduce the number of ship accidents. From left: Anastasia Skarpeti, Hazel Bryan Sivari, Steven Mallam, Salman Nazir, Marina Klostermann, Risza Rusli and Nurl Syita Ab Hadi. Photo: Ralf Haga

By Ralf Haga

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We saw it with KNM Helge Ingstad, and we saw it in Brennpunkt on NRK last week; Ship accidents can have enormous consequences.

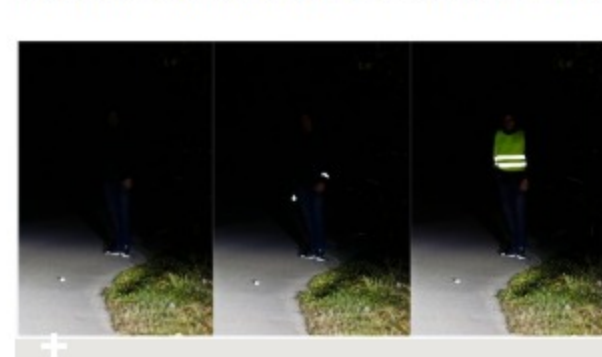
SHARE Both people, material values and, not least, nature, are injured when accidents happen at sea. Last week, NRK released a documentary on the export of old cars and electrical articles from Norway and other European countries to Africa. Some of the viewers saw was an Italian-owned ship that caught fire earlier this year and went to the bottom of France with 350 containers and 2,000 vehicles.

Several times over the course of a few years, ships with significant cargo have crashed after fires or collisions. One of the worst accidents was outside Singapore in 2004, when a 4,000-car ship sank after a collision with an oil tanker.

Salman Nazir from Pakistan has in recent months been working on a project that is meant to cause fewer accidents at sea. Nazir was headhunted to Norway and the USN (University of Southeastern Norway) to lead the EU-funded project.

11 million

- We received 1.1 million euros (just over NOK 11 million) for a four-year project, and we are well underway. Today we have a seminar here at Bakkenteigen, with researchers from many countries, says Nazir.



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He adds that those involved have traveled around to countries, places and businesses that are relevant to gathering knowledge that can be useful in the work of making maritime operations safer.

- We use many approaches and try to obtain a lot of different knowledge that can be gathered and contribute to improvements. One of the factors we are looking at is the causes of human error, says Nazir.

At the pilot stage

It is a fact that many accidents are caused by human failure. Still, Nazir doesn't think the time is right for self-propelled ships at first.

(article continues below image)



LOOKING FOR IMPROVEMENTS: Salman Nazir (left) and Steven Mallam hope to contribute to fewer fatalities in the maritime industry. Photo: Ralf Haga

- Self-propelled vessels are at the testing stage, but I think it's a long time before we can use that technology extensively. So far, we must try to make the interaction between people and technology as good as possible and minimize the risk of errors, says the project manager.

At Bakkenteigen now he brings with him researchers from, among others, Greece, Malaysia, England and Germany.

Marina Klostermann has traveled from the latter country and Ruhr University in Bochum. She is a trained psychologist.

- It gives me a lot of weight in that area when I'm out and trying to map skills and causes of mistakes that happen, she says.

Learn from each other

From Canada comes Steven Mallam.

- Today, there are probably insufficient routines for the exchange of knowledge between, for example, the process industry and other types of industry related to the sea and shipping traffic, and we want to help to do something about it, he says.



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Nor does he have undoubtedly positive things to say about automation.

- Automation has many good sides, but can also be used to mainly cut costs. Unfortunately, we see this in many industries, but it is important that technology does not replace people without the security aspect being taken care of.

Many reasons

Salman Nazir and his colleagues actively use simulators in search of improvements, and companies such as Kongsberg Maritime, Kongsberg Digital and German RWE, as well as Malaysian Petronas, are all involved.

"It is easy to blame individuals when accidents happen, but there are many different reasons, which are often more underlying, and we want to map them out and try to find answers that can lead to fewer accidents," Nazir concludes.

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