Challenges of the Columbia River Bar Pilots

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Student Presentaton

Summary
Throughout maritime history, pilots have played an essential role in maintaining vessel safety. The Columbia River Bar Pilots guide ships across an eighteen-mile passage, ranked one of the most dangerous and challenging pilotages in the world. Each day these bar pilots encounter adverse weather, challenging jetties and sand bars, fishing traffic, a constantly changing channel, as well as tides and currents. This pilotage is located on the northwestern coast of the continental United States and is known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific." Due to the extreme conditions that bar pilots experience, they have been one of the first pilot associations to integrate helicopters for pilot transportation as well as state-of-the-art, self-righting pilot boats.

Because of simulator training, students at maritime academies are provided with the educational foundation to become skilled mariners; however, they lack the maritime experience of someone who rose from within the ranks. Merchant Marine cadets routinely demonstrate metacognitive skills during bridge team training. These students are thinking about thinking. They perform complex tasks, execute precise communications, and manage intricate situations. (Teel, 1999) Simulators offer near to real-life situations in a classroom setting. Based on the career of a Columbia River Bar Pilot, my research will explore the significance of simulator training while attending a maritime academy. The numerous contributions of the Columbia River Bar Pilots in the field of maritime safety were brought to my attention in July 2003, when I had the opportunity to ride along with a bar pilot. I will illustrate the demand for continual simulator training and constant awareness, which these pilots need to have in order to navigate the ever-changing channel as a result of dredging and coastal erosion. I will look into the United States Coast Guard coxswain training program, located at the mouth of the Columbia River, to provide extreme condition training for boat coxswains. My paper will explain the dangers of the Columbia River Bar and demonstrate the need for educated, competent bar pilots.

REFERENCES

1. Teel, J. Samuel (1999). Norcontrol Users Conference, Victoria, BC. *The Relationship Between Full Mission Simulation and Reflective / Metacognitive Learning.*