



Press release

Coronavirus impact on seafarers could lead to large numbers quitting the industry

Maritime Professionals' Union, Nautilus International has stepped up efforts to end the Covid-19 crew change crisis as research shows nearly 90% of British seafarers have been affected by the pandemic and one in two is now considering their future in the industry.

Like the M.E.B.A., Nautilus International is affiliated to the Nautilus Federation, a group of 22 unions representing maritime and shipping professionals around the world.

Nautilus is calling for governments and industry to work together to facilitate as many crew changes as possible throughout December to 'deliver seafarers home for Christmas', as some crew members face a second Christmas away from home.

For this reason the Union has today (1 December) [launched a new petition](#), calling on governments and the United Nations to work together to ensure that seafarers are designated as key workers in every country, and allow global crew changes to take place.

An estimated 400,000 seafarers from across the globe are now stranded on ships, continuing to work but unable to be relieved, in a crew change crisis which threatens trade and maritime safety.

Research by Nautilus revealed that nearly 90% of British seafarers have been directly impacted by the crew change crisis, with issues including being stranded at sea due to lack of crew change, stranded at home unable to join vessel, having their pay and conditions cut, and job losses.

Since the outset of the pandemic, Nautilus Federation affiliates have been inundated with requests for support and advice, and many members of these unions have highlighted the impact of the crisis, whether they have been trapped at sea or unable to join their ship.

One member said: 'Being a seafarer for 42 years did not prepare me for the mental stress of having a Covid-19 susceptible partner back home completely isolated and alone for five months. I was only expected to be away for eight weeks.'

Another said: 'I was stuck at home for over seven months with no salary. I had to borrow money from my family and sell personal belongings to survive.'

While the wife of a seafarer still trapped at sea told the Union: 'My husband is currently at sea, having done twice his contracted time. He is now suffering with anxiety and I am extremely worried about him. He has no way of getting help via telephone, decent nutritional meals, a care package or human contact.'

Commenting, Nautilus International general secretary Mark Dickinson said:

'Our members work hard to supply food, medicines - and presents - to UK households. They often do so without much acknowledgement or public recognition.

'This year, the coronavirus pandemic has given rise to unprecedented levels of stress, fatigue and safety concerns due to countries closing their borders and preventing them from seeing loved ones. Now many seafarers are left re-considering their very future in the industry.

'Normally at this time of year we remind people that seafarers deliver them Christmas. This year we are calling on everyone to deliver seafarers home for Christmas.'

Notes to editors

Nautilus International is the trade union and professional organisation for maritime professionals at sea and ashore. We represent 20,000 maritime professionals including ship masters (captains), officers, officer trainees (cadets) and shipping industry personnel, such as ship pilots, inland navigation workers, vessel traffic services operators (similar to air traffic control), harbourmasters, seafarers in the oil and gas industry, and shore-based staff.

The Nautilus Federation is a group of 22 likeminded trade unions in shipping and inland waterways transport who have come together to improve and expand the services they offer to their members. All Nautilus Federation affiliates are also affiliated to – or recognised by – the International Transport Workers' Federation.

Nautilus International General Secretary Mark Dickinson available for interview along with detailed case studies.

The petition can be found here: <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/crew-change-for-christmas>