

NUMAST-endorsed bank should give cadets a bit of credit

PERHAPS readers of the Telegraph may be interested in the 'only credit card endorsed by NUMAST'.

I started as an engineer cadet with P&O Nedlloyd last September and at age 18 in June, having held a Northern Rock Bank

current account for two years, applied for a Bank of Scotland NUMAST affinity card, showing the 'red duster'.

This was declined, quoting credit scoring. When I returned from my first ship in August, I contacted them to be told it was a lack of credit history. I suggested that on that basis they must be declining all NUMAST trainees.

At least Tesco started me with a £500 limit. Surely a modest limit is not too much of a risk when people on benefits can get cards?

If any other cadets have had a problem, please contact NUMAST so they can review their endorsement.

My father and another relative have now declined their cards — if you support their attitude, please follow suit and tell Bank of Scotland why.

ROB ATKINSON
mem no 190894

NUMAST deputy general secretary Peter McEwen replies: NUMAST has special arrangements with HBOS, including review procedures. Mr Atkinson's case will be taken up and resolved. There have not been any previous problems for cadets. If any member has an issue with HBOS, then contact NUMAST direct.



What's on your mind?

Tell your fellow officers in NUMAST — and the wider world of shipping — through a letter to the **Telegraph**. Keep to a limit of 300 words if you can — though longer contributions will be considered. • You may use a pen name or just your membership number if you don't want to be identified — say so in an accompanying note — but you must let the **Telegraph** have your name, address and membership number. • Send your letter to the editor, **Telegraph**, NUMAST, 750-760 High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3BB, or use head office fax 020 8530 1015, or e-mail telegraph@numast.org



WHERE HAVE ALL THE STICKERS GONE?

MANY thanks go to Telegraph reader Captain Boris Banic, master of the Bahamas-flagged tanker Luzon Spirit, who took these pictures in the Croatian city of Split in August to show the global spread of NUMAST's Sea Sense campaign for maritime skills.

'Your Sea Sense campaign is really taking full swing,' he writes, 'with this car with Swiss plates and a Sea Sense sticker on its rear window.'

The car belongs to a seafarer employed by the Vancouver-based tanker giant, Teekay Shipping Ltd, Capt Banic adds.

Can any other Telegraph readers beat him in snapping a NUMAST Sea Sense/Keep our Merchant Navy sticker in a remote location?

The Union has distributed thousands of the campaign stickers since they were first launched and they must have ended up in some varied locations!

Please send pictures to the Telegraph at NUMAST head office, or e-mail telegraph@numast.org • If you haven't yet stuck up for seafaring skills, turn to page 39 for details of how to obtain your Sea Sense sticker.

Seafarers' tax is being abused

I WORK in the offshore industry on Anchor Handling Supply vessels, and have just had to witness what I can only call an outright abuse of the seafarers' tax allowance system.

My vessel was recently up-manned with an ROV and survey team for a major installation project.

For seven weeks, these people swanned around the vessel as though they owned the place, complained when they had what they called substandard food — although our cook is perhaps one of the best I have sailed with in recent years — and whinged that the cabins they were allocated were devoid of such luxuries like TV and DVD players.

Then, to add insult to injury, when the time came for them to be demobbed as they like to call it, out came a plethora of seamen's discharge books which they requested be

stamped so that they could claim their tax back.

As a seafarer of more years than I care to remember, I felt a lot of resentment when, in opening the aforesaid books, there was not one of them that had any sort of MCA or otherwise recognised seagoing qualification inside.

Able Seaman, Mate or Second Engineer are amongst those capacities you would expect to see, not ROV Pilot or Surveyor. These people are quite obviously obtaining discharge books under false pretences, and then using them to abuse the system. Not only that, it also falsifies the amount of seamen on the register.

Even more annoying is the fact that they quite openly brag about their 'Day Rate' being in excess of £200, and in some cases over £300.

Should the taxman require that proof of being a 'true' seaman be made before granting a tax-free year, then I for one would openly welcome it — if only to protect this benefit for the future, and from these 'false' sailors!

To all those so-called sailors working offshore that are now howling their protests at this letter, shut up or put up — if you want to claim this tax allowance, at least have the decency to get off your overpaid backsides and go and get an Able Seaman's certificate at least!

mem no 185852
NUMAST deputy general secretary Peter McEwen comments: **The fact that many non-seafarers claim the seafarers' FED is why the Inland Revenue has brought in all the restrictions! Clearly, the lesson has still not been learnt by the Revenue.**

AIS is in danger of adding to the increasing number of idiots at sea

AFTER reading your AIS article (Alert over AIS safety) in the August Telegraph, I would like to raise a few points.

Firstly, how the system is supposed to help my vessel being attacked is beyond me, unless the terrorist/pirate is kind enough to display his intentions on the AIS. What is more likely is the already well informed bad guys are sitting watching their own systems and cherry-picking targets, as all the info he needs is in front of him.

Secondly, this is just another piece of kit that helps increase the chaos of navigating the sea lanes

of the world. The information displayed just plays into the hands of the increasing numbers of watchkeepers who use the VHF as their first method of collision avoidance. It also helps the growing numbers of idiots who, once fitted with ARPA, seem to think unless the CPA is zero they have no problem, so go back to reading the paper!

I fully understand that the system can be of benefit to the authorities, so why not fit every vessel with a transmitter and leave out the receiver? Of course then the massive amount of money made by getting these

things fitted to every vessel would not have been made.

Dr Bailey says in the article: 'For the navigator on the ship's bridge to positively identify surrounding vessels by name and type, combined with the availability of voyage information — such as course and speed — provides for an improved awareness of the developing navigational situation against which to make collision avoidance decisions.'

Lovely prose but total crap — any good watchkeeper can make all the decisions he needs to avoid collision without the help of this

little box on the console, and they have been doing so for years. It just makes the lazy, ignorant and untrained watchkeepers worse.

What is needed is for the authorities to come down like a ton of bricks on bad practice/ navigation, and the slow but steady loss of the collision avoidance regs/rules of the road. Let's get tough and start ripping up tickets or banning the sort of dross sailing in our waters from ever doing so again, plus heavy fines for the companies that employ them — not more shiny toys to play with.

mem no 189888

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