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PRESS RELEASE

19.5% fewer ship accidents in EU during 2009 yet trend may be reversing, says EMSA

(Lisbon, 20 May 2010) Today, in the context of the *EU Maritime Day* event in Gijón, Spain, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) launches its *Maritime Accident Review 2009*. The review, which looks at shipping in and around EU waters, shows a 19.5% drop in total accidents, and 17% drop in the number of ships involved in accidents in 2009 in comparison to the market boom years of 2007/2008, although the number was still significantly higher than in 2006. The figures also show that loss of life and pollution were substantially reduced. However, the Agency advises caution in assuming that the downward trend will continue, as an early look at January 2010 figures suggests that accident figures are already beginning to increase again as shipping traffic begins to recover.

'EMSA's *Maritime Accident Review* gives us an annual opportunity to look at accidents occurring in and around European waters, and to assess whether measures taken to improve maritime safety are having an effect,' says EMSA Executive Director Willem de Rooter. 'The positive news is that, while the global economic crisis can be seen as a 'commercial cloud' for shipping, it has a silver lining in terms of maritime safety. The latest review recorded a significant reduction in shipping accidents, lives lost and pollution last year. However, with ship traffic and the associated commercial pressures on the increase once more, we cannot afford to let our guard down at any time.'

626 vessels in 540 accidents during 2009

The *Maritime Accident Review 2009* reports that 626 vessels were involved in 540 accidents (sinkings, collisions, groundings, fires/ explosions and other significant accidents) in and around EU waters during the year. This compares with 754 vessels in 670 accidents in 2008, 762 in 715 accidents in 2007 and 535 in 505 accidents during 2006. So, it can be seen that, although 2009 saw a significant reduction from the 2008 and 2007 figures, largely due to the global economic downturn, the number of vessels involved in accidents was still 17% higher than in 2006. The EMSA sources also reported that 52 seafarers lost their lives on ships operating in and around EU waters in 2009 (compared with 82 in both 2008 and 2007 and 76 in 2006).

With respect to accidental pollution, the estimate of the amount of oil spilled in reported accidents in and around EU waters once again reduced, this time to 1500-2000 tonnes (in comparison with 2000-3000 tonnes in 2008 and 7000-8000 tonnes in 2007). In addition, figures from the EMSA CleanSeaNet satellite-based pollution monitoring system show that the number of pollution incidents confirmed after verifications by Member States was down from 232 in 2008 to 194 in 2009. Overall, these figures suggest that measures aimed at improving the pollution record of shipping are having an effect.

Moreover, while Europe has not recorded a major oil spill on the scale of the Erika (1999) or Prestige (2002) disasters for almost a decade, recent events in the Gulf of Mexico serve as a poignant reminder of a global need for a high level of preparedness. Indeed, in the case of a total well head failure, the equivalent of one major oil tanker spill per day could pour into the sea, so this must be borne in mind in decisions on how best to organise pollution-related contingency plans.

Copies of the *Maritime Accident Review 2009* are available on the EMSA website at www.emsa.europa.eu, together with the previous publications in the series (*Maritime Accident Review 2007* and *Maritime Accident Review 2008*).

Further information

Images of accidents and maps of maritime accident density during 2009 are available on request. For further information and media enquiries, please contact:

Louis Baumard:
Tel: +351 21 1209250
louis.baumard@emsa.europa.eu or

Peter Thomas:
Tel: +351 21 1209281
peter.thomas@emsa.europa.eu

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About EMSA: The European Maritime Safety Agency is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies. Based in Lisbon, the Agency provides technical assistance and support to the European Commission and Member States in the development and implementation of EU legislation on maritime safety, pollution by ships and maritime security. It has also been given operational tasks in the field of oil pollution response, vessel monitoring and in long-range identification and tracking of vessels.

About EU Maritime Day: 20 May is the annual EU Maritime Day. Further information about this year's event can be found online at: <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/>.