

10/7/14
LG v Bates

Stayed at home near Chester the night before and travelled up late morning as my exam wasn't until 1445.

Didn't have a task book as I'm RN transfer so went in quite early as he had nothing to look through.

He seemed very pleasant, he even joked with me from the beginning, as we went in he said "sorry I've nothing better to offer you, only vodka" (the jug of tap water they give you!)
He said there are no trick questions and asked me if I had seen MGN69 and the syllabus so knew what to expect, I said yes.

He puts you on a little model ship, says you're carrying different types of general cargo, he listed a few and some DGs; the way he set out the situation so I geared myself up for DG and general cargo loading questions...

Cadet wants to know where to find info on Passage Planning (me - standard; 5500, BPG, company procedures etc)

Joining your vessel, no safety net under gangway and no watchman at top, what are your thoughts? (me - not complying ISPS even if only level 1 and Means of Access Regs in Coswop ch 6/13)

Meet the 2nd officer you're relieving, shows you bridge.

It's a new ship, what equipment would you expect to find? (think here he might have been looking for approved ECDIS as Dave primed me for this, he had the same question so maybe hot topic)

How would you know the ECS was an ECDIS? (me - Solas symbol and noted on Safety Equipment Certificate)

What training would you expect to receive for ECDIS? (me - IMO model course 1.27 and type specific)

They haven't updated it for 30 weeks, you get a new disc through; do you need the rest of the discs for the other weeks as well? (me - to be honest I've never been on a ship with approved ECDIS and had to do the updates but I'm pretty sure they're all incorporated so as long as you have the latest, all the changes to date will be included, but I'd check that before I actually did it)

Compass has large bubble in it (I thought here we go, maintenance of compasses etc) but he didn't ask any of that, instead he said so it seems the Mate and Master are pretty shoddy, what would you class this as (or smth to that effect) - (me - non-conformity as charts not updated in a timely way etc)

Who would you report it to? (Safety Officer, DPA)

If they don't do anything, then who? (Flag State)

17 year old girl wants to climb the mast to replace a nav light, what do you think to this (she shouldn't work at night or undertake hazardous work ie needing a PTW unless its beneficial for her training - I wonder in this instance if it is really, probably not - I read somewhere unless supervised closely as well (applies for those with less than 12 months sea time as well) then they could and he seemed happy with this)

Why do we have an SMS, is it a requirement? (I said yes under ISM, rattled off the ISM sentence then the 5 objectives etc then he stopped me)

You see the 3rd engineer without safety boots on what do you think to this (me – depends on his activity – Bates, well yes ok he could have been sunbathing then obviously that wouldn't be an issue but if he was working! – I said non-conformity, I'd tell him how hazardous it is not to be in steel toe caps and report to the Safety Officer) Loads of 'non-conformity- type questions, I wasn't sure if there was something he was trying to get at but I don't think so, think he just loves ISM!

How do you keep a good navigational watch? (I gave the standard STCW answer, started with Masters standing orders then comply with IRPCS rule 5 and 6 that's as far as it went)

The Chief Engineer wants to open up a tank to make an entry, what is the procedure? (me – vent well in advance, at least 24 hours, block off access, RA, PTW – I talked about the specific Entry Permit and what was on it including checklist, test atmosphere)

Then he asked about the O₂ meter – if it read 20.8% would that be ok not 21% (me – yes because actually O₂ is more like 20.8% not really 21%, but if it read 17% it would not be ok)

Then he asked what if it read 24% (me – still not right so I'd tell the Safety Officer/ Chief Officer and take it out of service and get another one correctly working and calibrated)

How do you use it (me – several different locations at different levels)

Then continued with entry procedure and checks, he asked what would the emergency signal likely to be (me – if there is a lifeline, 3 pulls on the line, or maybe via comms over radios to the competent person at the entrance, then the General Alarm should be sounded in the event of any emergency)

Your lookout reports a vessel 5 points on the port bow, you're heading East, what does he bear? (NE x N) – (if anyone struggles with this which you shouldn't its pretty easy but from past papers I've noticed he ALWAYS says 5 points on the port bow and its always a fairly easy heading to begin with, so just practice counting round to the left)

3 ROR questions –

He put a vessel 5 points on my port bow, I was on his beam (maybe just abaft, hard to see with the little models) and I really didn't know where he was going with this as I thought he was trying to catch me out with "is it an overtaking" – so I said in real life I'd establish definitely whether or not I'm not overtaking as it really didn't look to me like it was, but at sea at a real life distance you often can't tell just visually you need radar info – he said would she know if you were? I said yes it would be a lot easier for her as she could just take my bearing and compare it to her heading (I thought here we go, he's going to ask me to work out what I bear from her etc, but no...) so he said what would you do in this situation – I said if I had determined it was indeed a crossing situation as it looks like it is I would maintain course and speed. Why? (me – quoted Rule 17ai).

He then asked a few questions about the situation; these were worded differently than I was expecting. Instead of the "what are your actions" etc he asked "so then what are her responsibilities towards you"? (me - Rule 16). What should she avoid doing? (Rule 8, small alterations of course/ speed etc, sufficient searoom, avoid crossing ahead)

So what would you expect her to do? (me – bold alteration of course to starboard preferably IAW Rule 8 or slow down and allow me to pass ahead). Could she turn to port? (me – yes she could, but she should avoid crossing ahead so not really an efficient manoeuvre)

FV in TSS gear, little model boat plus red over white and another single white on a smartie board – no true vector on your radar – what is she doing? (gear extending over 150m, could be from astern making way otherwise but if no true vector then not)
Could she be at anchor? (here I totally messed up, could not remember if she would show anchor lights if anchored, total brain fart duh!).

He asked “what are her responsibilities?” (me – to not impede my passage as I’m following the TSS). Him – yes but what does that mean exactly, does she adhere to Rule 16 & the normal Rule 8 etc? No he doesn’t! (I have to say looking back this is an obvious question/ answer but at the time I didn’t see what he was getting at – he wanted Rule 8f). (Here he totally helped me out, I reckon he could have failed me on the whole of this FV question, just shows if you’re know your stuff in the first part and confident they’ll go the extra mile to help you out when they know you’re just being an idiot) – eventually got it and reeled off Rule 8f (knowing Rules verbatim will get you out of a real sticky situation if you can, as it proves you do know the rule even if you’re being a complete dumbass).

Then the one Jonty got asked with a PDV over 50m 4 points to stbd - what would you expect in this situation? (me, if he’s showing that aspect now then he’ll open down my starboard side there’ll be no risk of collision).

As you get closer you’d see the masthead lights get closer together, what are the requirements for this (here I think he was testing to see if I really knew my lights rules after my FV failure, if you know the dimensions surely you know the basics) – so I gave the aft 4.5m above and visible above other at distance 1000m ahead and he seemed v happy.

Then as I thought maybe we were at the end he went back to questions!

The Captain wants to anchor, 5 shackles on the port anchor, you are leading the anchor party how would you prepare to anchor? (standard for your vessel start hydraulics, PPE, lighting, brake checks etc)

HRU – expired, what do you do with it (me – from past questions I knew what he was looking for – test it on board for crew training and to see if it works) then he said if not then what (me – report back to the manufacturer) and he said what else (me – I’m not totally sure Sir but I think report to the Flag State) he said yes exactly, definitely report to the FS.

At the end he gestured to the MGN69 and said there’s loads more here we could go through but you’re fine, I don’t want to go any further, it’s a pass. Slight wobble with the FV but you held your nerve and continued with no problems so well done for that. That was it! He said he’d be happy to sail with me as one of his Officers and that he doesn’t say that very often so I took that as a big compliment.

That’s all I can remember – there was probably more but nothing difficult or complicated. Honestly there were no weird questions, the only hard time I had was that I created for myself, he was very relaxed and gave me all the time I needed to think, no pressure.

So the cargo vessel etc he gave me at the beginning we never even touched on anything to do with that – I really thought being from the RN I’d get a hammering on cargo, stability etc (though he did ask if I’d done my SQA as I am Exam route so that maybe took the pressure off). So I think he makes the initial scenario to set up for a huge variety of questions, but if you answer his first lot confidently and show you have worked hard and know your stuff he won’t need to keep you there any longer than needs be and go into the potentially more complicated stuff.

He then filled in the paperwork afterwards, whereas I think they often do this before, so he sent me out to wait in reception while he finished that. I was in the exam itself about 35/ 40 mins, I was out within 45 mins in total with the paperwork.

Thank you so much to all the lecturers at Fleetwood, particularly Jonathon Ward for Orals Prep; fantastic teaching and really making sure we knew what we needed to succeed in the exam, and for in addition giving up his own time outside class and being on the end of the phone whenever we needed help. Also to the Blended Learning staff for ensuring all my courses etc were sorted out for me and assisting with any queries whenever I needed.

Good luck to everyone still to take it, study hard and know your stuff, this will ensure you feel confident and will get you through it!