

# Technology Assists Preventative Maintenance

By Karen Rainbolt, FOGHORN Managing Editor

For several years, Mike Radtke, Marine Operations Manager, Madeline Island Ferry Line, Madeline Island, WI, had been searching for a preventative maintenance system that would best serve the ferry line—and its employees—but none of the off-the-shelf products seemed to fit the bill. Then, a chance conversation led to him to contact Barry Sinex. Sinex, just happened to know all about preventative maintenance. After all, he had spent years maintaining another type of passenger carriers: commercial aircraft.

Radtke and Sinex met at Sinex's office in Duluth, IA, and the two men quickly realized the similarities between the aviation and marine industry. Radtke explained the need for a system that would not only protect Madeline Island Ferry Line's vessels, he wanted something that would assure the safety of the passengers and crew, while meeting the stringent requirements of the U.S. Coast Guard inspectors. Given his many years in the aviation industry, and working closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Sinex understood completely. It was the beginning of PVA Associate Member Sinex Solutions, a web-based preventative maintenance program for the passenger vessel industry.

Barry Sinex, who has had a lifelong passion as a mariner, set out to learn as much as about the passenger vessel industry as possible, and attended the PVA Annual Convention at MariTrends 2005 in Tampa, FL.

"I talked to as many PVA members as I could, and learned that that

the PVA group is phenomenal," recounted Sinex. "They are extremely knowledgeable. I came away from that meeting determined to build a program that would help PVA members

be safer and more efficient in their operations."

Using his past experiences, and the new information he was gaining, Sinex soon created a PVA-inspired

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## Introduction to the Streamlined Inspection Program (SIP)

the SIP allows onboard and shore side vessel operating personnel to conduct the majority of inspections required by the Coast Guard Regulations, and to have the adequacy of these inspections verified by Coast Guard marine inspectors on a regular basis. It was developed in response to the Maritime Regulatory Reform Initiative. The Initiative challenged the Coast Guard to re-evaluate its regulatory programs and to develop alternatives that would ensure the same level of safety.

It is the intent of the SIP to raise the overall safety of a vessel by actively empowering the vessel's support personnel. The focus on the establishment of this program is to develop, under Coast Guard supervision, a process by which the inspection of the vessel is carried out by qualified company personnel with approved test procedures in a self-perpetuating, self-correcting format.

The SIP may not be suited for every company. This program is intended for companies, regardless of size, which have an absolute commitment to safety and which employ capable and dedicated vessel operating personnel. The initial time and effort necessary to establish this program is considerable. However, the long-term benefits of establishing the program outweigh the initial cost. Initial pilot SIPs have proven highly successful. Reductions in Coast Guard inspection time were realized allowing marine inspector resources to be concentrated on higher risk activities. Companies experienced reductions in both time and monies required to maintain regulatory compliance. An additional advantage realized was that crews became more familiar with safety equipment and vessel systems, resulting in higher crew moral and opportunities for professional advancement. Additionally, a substantial safety dividend was realized when the level of vessel safety was both increased and maintained over time.

Source: U.S. Coast Guard

For more information, go to <http://www.uscgmil/hq/g-m/sip/siphome.htm#intro>

The Streamlined Inspection Program (SIP) is a voluntary alternate method of inspecting a vessel to ensure regulatory compliance. Instead of the traditional Coast Guard inspection by a marine inspector,

preventative maintenance program that would meet Coast Guard requirements, while helping operators succeed.

Radtke's employers, Gary Russell and Robin-Trinko Russell saw the potential in the new system, and encouraged him to pursue the concept.

"What prompted us to go this route was the need the find one system that would be a centralized clearinghouse to contain all our vital information," said Radtke. "In my experience, having different paper trails and log books is cumbersome and inefficient. I knew that what we needed was a computerized system that management and the crew could access. It would be more functional and always up-to-date."

The computerization factor, he said, was one of the driving forces that led him away from the off-the-shelf packages that he had tried in the past. The other driving force was the Coast Guard Streamlined Inspection Program (SIP).

"I kept coming back to the SIP concept," Radtke recalled. "Preventative maintenance and SIP are very much linked so it made sense that we should have a program in place that allowed us to take part in the SIP program."

For qualified operations, SIP empowers operators to conduct self-inspections of their vessels following a stringent set of guidelines provided by the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard inspectors then follow up to be certain that the inspections were done correctly and that the vessels are seaworthy and safe. (See sidebar on SIP).

Not only does SIP give operators the advantage with time (no waiting for inspectors), but, given today's security-driven climate, particularly in military organizations like the Coast Guard, empowering industry as much as possible makes sense to ensure that routine maintenance and safety checks



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are done efficiently and well.

"As far as I could tell," Radtke said, "no off-the-shelf maintenance programs offered the SIP link."

So, in June of this year, after countless meetings and discussions, the Madeline Island Ferry Line became the first customer of Sinex Solutions' preventative maintenance program in its marine division.

According to Radtke, the program's web-based application is its finest feature. "I can access our vessels' maintenance information any time, any where. All I need is a computer with Internet access and I can follow up and check on employees' record-keeping 24/7 on four vessels. It gives me peace of mind knowing that nothing has fallen

through the cracks, which can happen with paper logs."

Being web-based means that all the information is not residing on one PC, ensuring that a computer crash will not result in a loss of critical data.

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*Mike Radtke*

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The system is flexible enough to enter one-time repairs or schedule routine maintenance, another favorite feature of Radtke's. In addition, inspection criteria are entered into the system for the Coast Guard's annual

inspection, and the company's own pre-inspection in the spring.

Furthermore, Radtke believes that this program is an excellent management tool. "Already I have noticed an increase in productivity from my employees. They are able to track their own work, and even schedule their daily tasks. And, I am able to follow what they are doing on each vessel. It is very efficient."

Sinex is pleased. "This technology was designed specifically to behoove all PVA vessel members. I am certain that there are many more applications that can be done with this program, and I am looking forward to feedback that will make this tool even better." ■

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