



SCF Unicom Turns the Tide on Heavy Weather Damage with Applied Weather Technology's BonVoyage (BVS) Software

SCF Unicom

Unicom Management Services (Cyprus) Ltd is the wholly owned ship manager for the Russian State ship owning company JSC Sovcomflot. Called SCF Unicom, its managed fleet currently comprises over 79 vessels and has expanded to include crude oil and gas tankers and most recently, ice class tankers for employment in Russia's Arctic region.

Situation – Severe Winter Weather Damages SCF Unicom's Ships

When a harsh winter with severe weather conditions damaged some of the ships operated by SCF Unicom, it was David Sharp's job as marine manager responsible for the safe navigation of the fleet to figure out a better way to help the ships' captains and crew steer clear of dangerous weather conditions, prevent future damage to the fleet and avoid crew injury.

According to Sharp, during stormy winters in the North Atlantic, it was common for SCF Unicom to have three or four ships suffering from heavy weather damage when Masters routed their ships by the shortest distance and traditional great circle routes rather than the least time track. Damages included everything from decimation of bulwarks to loss of expensive deck equipment to damage to the decks themselves. With occurrences of damage costing approximately \$100,000 per incident and taking ships out of commission for several days for repairs, causing them to lose valuable time at sea and revenue, the stakes were high for preventing heavy weather damage to SCF Unicom's fleet.

To help address the problem, Sharp says he wanted to bring more visual and graphical weather information on board that was easier for the ships' captains and crew

“We used to measure heavy weather damage in terms of hundreds of thousands of dollars and the number of days our ships spent being repaired – now we measure our heavy weather damage in the tens of dollars and number of lost lifebuoys.”

**– David Sharp, HSSE
Team Manager at Unicom**



members to understand and use than the poor-quality text-based weather reports that the ships had been receiving.

But when Sharp initially tried to implement graphical weather software, he met with some resistance. “When you sit with ancient mariners, they would say, ‘When I was routed by so and so company I had the worst weather ever,’ and it was quite a battle to say ‘It’s a new era. It’s a new age.’ Fortunately the management and owners of SCF Unicom were receptive to new ideas to try to resolve problems efficiently and easily.”

Solution – SCF Unicom Deploys BVS on More Than 70 Ships and All New Vessels

After first adopting Applied Weather Technology’s BonVoyage marine voyage optimization software (BVS) as part of a trial on three ships, SCF Unicom observed that the onboard software was helping its Captains to reduce heavy weather damage to those ships. The company then quickly expanded use of BVS to approximately 17 ships within its managed fleet, and after positive feedback from Captains, now routinely deploys BVS to all new vessels. BVS is now deployed on more than 70 Unicom vessels.

“We have trialed other companies’ weather data, and in my opinion the onboard software we have from AWT is the visually the easiest to understand and follow ” said David Sharp, now HSSE (health, safety, security and environmental) Team Manager at Unicom. “Our crews are very comfortable using it to avoid conditions that could cause heavy weather damage.”

“We used to measure heavy weather damage in terms of hundreds of thousands of dollars and the number of days our ships spent being repaired – now we measure our heavy weather damage in the tens of dollars and number of lost lifebuoys,” said Sharp.

Results – SCF Unicom Says BVS Helps Reduce Costs from Heavy Weather Damage to Ships

According to SCF Unicom, BVS saves the company money by helping its captains and crew to prevent the occurrence of heavy weather damage, saving time in dry dock and the costs associated with delays and loss of revenue that result when ships are being repaired. Since 2001, Unicom has not suffered any serious structural damages due to heavy weather encounters. Damages have been mostly limited to minor fittings and fixtures.

SCF Unicom says that in addition to using BVS to avoid dangerous weather conditions, its ship Captains also use BVS to examine ways to minimize fuel consumption and therefore carbon emissions, and to select the most time- and fuel-efficient routes to their destinations. Also, when there are weather systems that cause concern for their Captains and operations teams, they take advantage of AWT’s weather-routing services to help ensure crew, vessel and cargo safety.

Thanks to the foresight of Sharp and SCF Unicom management – who were early adopters of BVS when onboard weather routing software was still somewhat in its infancy – and the company’s 10-year relationship with AWT, it could be said that SCF Unicom is now enjoying the calm after the storm.