

AMERICAN PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

The Respective Roles and Responsibilities of the Pilot and the Master*

Navigation of a ship in United States pilotage waters is a shared responsibility between the pilot and the master/bridge crew. The compulsory state pilot directs the navigation of the ship, subject to the master's overall command of the ship and the ultimate responsibility for its safety. The master has the right, and in fact the duty, to intervene or displace the pilot in circumstances where the pilot is manifestly incompetent or incapacitated or the ship is in immediate danger ("in extremis") due to the pilot's actions. With that limited exception, international law requires the master and/or the officer in charge of the navigational watch to "cooperate closely with the pilot and maintain an accurate check on the ship's position and movement."

State-licensed pilots are expected to act in the public interest and to maintain a professional judgment that is independent of any desires that do not comport with the needs of maritime safety. In addition, licensing and regulatory authorities, state and federal, require compulsory pilots to take all reasonable actions to prevent ships under their navigational direction from engaging in unsafe operations. Because of these duties, a compulsory pilot is not a member of the bridge "team." Nevertheless, a pilot is expected to develop and maintain a cooperative, mutually-supportive working relationship with the master and bridge crew in recognition of the respective responsibility of each for safe navigation.

* Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the America Pilots' Association on October 8, 1997.