

Places of refuge

Ship safety is far too an important issue to be left to the politicians, said Michael Everard, president of Bimco, in an impassioned speech that questioned the European Commission's and the new European Maritime Safety Agency's understanding of the importance of 'place of refuge.' It is the biggest single thing we can do to improve safety is to provide places of refuge, he said.

A key talking point at the conference was the concept of place of refuge. Quoting from a speech he made in October 2001 following the sinking of the Erika Mr Everard questioned whether the European Commission had heeded his warning about the need for collective responsibility in ship safety.

"As a ship owner organisation, I am increasingly conscious of the way in which shipping is improving its safety, quality and efficiency, taking on board the burdens of ever greater regulation and more or less constant scrutiny. At the same time, there must be concern that the same sort of pressures are not apparent in many ports and terminals throughout the world."