



AUTHOR / KEY CONTACT

# Hoegh Osaka: What the Industry Has Learned



Sasha Rusakova  
Solicitor

✉ sasha.rusakova@la-law.com  
☎ 023 8082 7428

On Tuesday 10 June 2025, LA [Marine](#)'s Philippa Langton moderated a panel talk at Southampton's annual workboat trade show, Seawork, entitled "*Hoegh Osaka: Lessons in Effective Maritime Incident Response*". Organised by [WISTA UK](#) (the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association) and hosted by [Mercator Media](#), as organisers of [Seawork](#), the purpose of the talk and the discussion was to consider the impact, effects and lessons learnt from the incident involving the Hoegh Osaka on its 10-year anniversary. This was an incident that not only caused shockwaves in the local Southampton community, but also received worldwide media attention, with articles published in over 75 countries.

The talk featured introductions from Fiona Pankhurst (Head of Corporate Communications & PR, Mercator Media) and Jucilla Walters (Marketing Manager, NatPower Marine and WISTA UK Board Member), who provided insights into the ever-growing and expanding WISTA community (recently expanding to Jamaica) and its initiatives, particularly WISTA's cadet programme, which seeks to cover the cost of a female MLOCS cadet's three-year training.

Under Philippa's chairmanship, the speakers on the panel consisted of:

- **Mark Russell**, Gard P&I, one of the world's leading marine insurers
- **Alexandra Couvadelli**, Gard P&I, whose work focuses on legal and liability issues across complex

maritime cases

•

**Simon Burnay**, Waves Group, a naval architect and marine engineer with significant experience in incident investigation and casualty response

Mark played a key role in handling the insurance and legal aspects following the Hoegh Osaka grounding, offering valuable insight into the real-life and industry considerations arising during the incident. He helped the panel and audience better understand the large number of complex considerations that arise following such an incident, including not only the welfare of the seafarers involved (being the top priority), but also environmental factors, the removal of the wreckage, and managing reputational damage. Mark was on the scene in the immediate aftermath and was therefore able to detail the impact of the accident on the crew, who thankfully sustained no serious injuries, and the key role played by local seafarer support services.

Alexandra has extensive expertise in casualty response and claims management, providing an understanding of the incident from a regulatory and contractual background, which came into sharp focus during this case. She offered a detailed and accessible explanation of the complexities surrounding apportionment of liabilities in such an event, and the development of laws globally to enable effective responses. One particularly insightful point Alexandra made was that liability cannot be limited for wreck removal expenses under the LLMC, highlighting how the importance of wreck removal is recognised internationally due to its public and environmental implications.

Finally, Simon provided the audience with technical insights into the stability issues and salvage operations involved. As a regularly appointed SCR (Special Casualty Representative), Simon described the 24/7 nature of the role and the intense pressures involved. Importantly, he highlighted that an SCR today must carefully balance technical operations with associated costs, while under pressure from multiple parties, and still use their best endeavours to protect the environment, people, and property.

This concluded the presentation by the panel, followed by a question-and-answer session led by Philippa. Members of the audience asked insightful questions that sparked discussion about current industry practice and its future. One discussion in particular focused on whether the continuance of such incidents is caused by

an increase in negligent actions. This led to an engaging debate on the modern industry pressures of minimising costs and delivery times, which can encourage corner-cutting. However, as discussed, technological advancements have significantly reduced sinkings and fatalities, with shipowners now learning from both incidents and near misses to improve future processes. Equally, as one audience member noted, new technology brings new challenges, such as the need for salvors to be trained to handle incidents involving alternative fuels. The key takeaway emphasised by the panel was the importance of overpreparation in casualty response.

Many thanks to WISTA and the organisers of Seawork for hosting this informative and interactive workshop, and to [SLR Marine Recruitment](#) for sponsoring the event. The LA Marine team looks forward to seeing everyone at Seawork in 2026!