

TON VAN OOSTEN, CAPTAIN OF THE ORANJE:

## 'I SAW THAT WAVE COMING AND I KNEW THERE WAS NO ESCAPE!'

*Ton van Oosten:* In mid-January, the Oranje was sailing into the entrance of the Western Scheldt. It was early evening, and a gale was blowing. Captain Ton van Oosten received a call from the cook telling him that there was water in the mess. When he went to check, he saw water pouring out of the ceiling. He realized immediately that sea water was flowing through the open hatch of the inlet unit for the kitchen. He told the first officer to turn the ship immediately so that the wind would be blowing from the port side and so that he could go and shut the hatch safely on the starboard side. But when Ton van Oosten went on deck with two colleagues, an enormous wave came charging in their direction. His two colleagues managed to find shelter but he was picked up by the wave and smashed into the seating of a crane eight meters further. As the wave passed on, and the aftship returned to an even keel, his two colleagues dashed forward to bring him to safety. In the end, it turned out that he had a broken arm and a sprained knee.



*What did you think at the time?*

'I saw the wave coming, and I knew there was no escape. I thought it was the end. It's a miracle I survived. I've been sailing for more than 30 years and I've seen almost everything. But this turned my world upside down.'

*What did you do after the accident?*

'Immediately afterwards, I didn't know what to think. NINA had been launched and now I had been in an accident. I thought it was my own fault. Because I know the dangers of the sea, I decided to shut the hatch myself. With hindsight, I'm happy I took that decision: I would never have been able to forgive myself if I had sent somebody else into danger. Even so, I'm responsible for the entire ship and the crew. I wasn't wearing a lifejacket. Again, with hindsight, that was a fortunate decision. Lifejackets self-inflate in contact with water and so you float more. Even so, it is against the rules. Other than that,

I had thought about the risks of shutting the hatch and taken the corresponding action. But I hadn't checked whether that was enough. I thought I was to blame for that, too. Then I called Peter Berdowski. He said I should leave the ship immediately to take care of myself and my health.'

*Did the organization give you a lot of support during your time at home?*

'I got a fantastic amount of support, yes. That's great to see. I talked to all sorts of people about what happened and what could have been done differently. It would have been better to sail into the river slower - so that fewer waves would have broken on the deck - and to get into calmer water before shutting the hatch.'

*What lessons have you learnt?*

'As I talked to people, I began to realize that I did what I did because I hated the idea of all that seawater getting into my neat mess. When something like that happens, you forget about NINA: you are focused entirely on the ship and on shutting the hatch. I was driven by my emotions, not by logic. Which isn't very clever because the water had already got in, and the damage was already done. When something like that happens, you haven't got time to organize a toolbox meeting or make a job hazard analysis, but you should never, ever underestimate the situation. 'After the NINA course, my thinking was "I can do that, no problem". This accident shows that it's not that simple. That's true for me, and for everybody on board. We work in a world where we think we have to do everything in a hurry. NINA shows us that it makes sense to stop and think. I'm all in favor. I'm convinced that NINA will become a way of life in the end so that, even in emergencies, our first thought will be everybody's safety, followed by everything else. That reflex is what we should all be aiming for.'

## NINA ON THE ROADS

This year, Boskalis Offshore has adopted 'safe driving' as its leading safety theme. In combination with the NINA values, this is producing good results. 'Change starts with me.'

Car journeys have proven to be one of the most high-risk activities on Boskalis projects. There have been various traffic accidents in the past two years. So Boskalis Offshore thought it was time to devote extra attention to safe driving. 'Expats underestimate the risks,' explains area manager Jan Dompeling. 'Take the long, dull roads in the

Middle East that lull you into sleep. Trucks driving at night without lights. And U-turns in the middle of a motorway. It's up to us to make everybody aware of these problems: with a number of rules, but above all with the NINA values. Are you in a car with somebody you think is driving too fast? Say something about it. Feedback is important.'

### ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

For the PDET Rock Installation project in Brazil, drivers are at work transporting 240,000 tonnes of rock from the mine to the port: 9,000 return trips of 20 km. They were all invited to the NINA kick-off meeting looking at the risks of road transport. Their input was used to work further on the policy for safe driving. Project manager Boudewijn Baan:

'The drivers really get involved. For example, the client had set out a route for them. But it's a very busy and dangerous road. A number of drivers decided to look at alternative routes. We submitted the one they selected to the client, who gave the go-ahead. We've been keeping a very close eye on developments from day one. And we've booked results: there hadn't been any accidents worth mentioning.'

### MORE KNOWLEDGE

Adão Tavares Nascimento has been working as a driver in Brazil for 25 years. 'Thanks to NINA, we now know more about safety on the road. There is



a checklist that we use to check our trucks every morning. And we talk about safety during the daily work meetings. NINA has taught me to look at my own conduct. I'm responsible for my safety. I watch my speed. And if colleagues do something dangerous, I talk to them about it. Change starts with me.'

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Boskalis Offshore has developed a questionnaire that gives employees the opportunity to identify the factors that affect their driving and to say how things can be made safer. Everybody at Boskalis is invited to complete this questionnaire. The best idea will win a prize. You can find the questionnaire on [www.boskalis-nina.com](http://www.boskalis-nina.com).

*Top: Driver Adão Tavares Nascimento: 'Thanks to NINA, we now know more about safety on the road.'*

*Left: the NINA kick-off meeting with the Brazilian drivers.*

