

## Marine Pilot's milestone – obtaining an open license against all odds

**[Port Elizabeth, 16 January 2020]** The milestone in Sandile Gebashe's career was definitely obtaining his open license as Marine Pilot last year. This sought-after qualification enabled him to dock the biggest vessel visiting the Port of Ngqura, the MSC Elisa (142 000 gross tonnage, 366m length), on the day that he obtained this license. He has become the Port of Ngqura's third open license holder, with this scarce skill. The port's ultimate goal is to have five open license pilots.

"This is a huge pride in my development. The job of a ship's navigator is not just any kind of job – it is an art. I believe that I match this art perfectly with my sharp eye and good ear to analyse a situation, make quick decisions, judge distances and pay attention to detail," Sandile.

"The maritime career is a very challenging career, as the sea is a dangerous environment to work in. You need the right people for this job because a lot is at stake such as safety of life, efficient and safe navigation as well as the safety of the environment. Learning never stops as the maritime industry is continuously improving."

### My responsibilities

"My responsibilities include among others shifting vessels within the port, safely navigating vessels in and out of the port and assisting the Harbour Master with controlling the movement of vessels within port limits and anchorages."

### My challenges and highlights

Sandile has a list of scary challenges, which he has overcome with resilience. "The first day that I joined a ship was also my first job, my first aeroplane flight and my first visit to Cape Town. This was also the day that I nearly lost my life on board the ship! I lost my mother, two brothers and sister while I was away at sea. Challenges on a day-to-day basis include proper communication, poor planning and strong winds."

"My ultimate highlight was realising that I have made the right decision of furthering my studies after passing the second semester at university – not forgetting that days passed without food on my table. Another highlight was obtaining my Deck Officer Certificate of Competency and safely handling an incident in January 2013. The ship MSC Luciana broke loose in the Port of Ngqura due to strong winds. I had to steer the tug to safety to evacuate staff before the tug could possibly be squashed by the big vessel."

Sandile regards a Pilot as a critical position in the port. "I challenge myself to be as efficient as possible when serving our customers in due time."

### The man behind the pilot

Raised in Umzimkulu in KwaZulu-Natal, Sandile obtained a Diploma in Travel and Tourism, a National Technical Certificate in Mechanical and Marine Engineering and he is currently finalising the last module of a Diploma in Maritime Studies with the Durban University of Technology.

He started his seagoing career in 2002 with Unicorn Shipping. He gained further experience in various positions in TNPA (Ports of East London, PE and Cape Town), Safmarine and Maersk Line before joining the Port of Ngqura as Tugmaster in 2012. He also spent time in the Netherlands on training.

"I strongly believe that I can achieve my dreams. I am a quality obsessed and results driven person. I seek knowledge and wisdom, I read books and do research on matters that interest me. I am a father of three beautiful children and love spending time with them. After all, when you do the job that you love, you will never work a day in your life!"

### What is an open license?

An open license means a Marine Pilot is no longer restricted to handle a certain size of vessel - they can bring any vessel to the port. It takes a few years from obtaining the first licence to an open license, as there are a few licenses between the two. Marine Pilots are trained to eventually have an open license – it is regarded as their final destination and quite a milestone.

### Ends

#### Photo gallery:



Sandile Gebashe is the Port of Ngqura's third Marine Pilot obtaining an open license.

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