

Alert!



From bad to worse...

Seafarers' Welfare Boards in the 21st Century **p3**



Exploring Occupational Health and Safety **p4-5**



Wellness at Sea Promoting onboard health **p6**



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The cell phone call from Andreas' fiancé was the last straw on what had been a long hard day. She had been upset that he was unwilling to talk about their wedding plans despite his explanation that he had just come off watch from a *double header*, 0800 to 1600, in the engine room and that he needed a break, and a beer, before he could concentrate. A row had ensued and the situation had gone from bad to worse and, far from wedding plans, by the end they had traded insults which both of them would regret later.

Andreas, a Junior Engineer, threw the phone onto his day bed cursing it, girls in general, the ship, the voyage and the Chief Engineer in particular. He reached into the fridge and withdrew a cold beer, pulled the ring instinctively and heard the familiar welcoming hiss. As he tipped the cold liquid into his mouth his world began to feel a better place. After a couple more cans, a bag of crisps, a shower and having re-watched a favourite movie he turned in. He had four hours until he was due on watch again at midnight.

He lay there, feeling quite tired, but with the argument going around in his head. He had been headstrong and unreasonable and had definitely said things that he should not have done. The chance to make amends would not be available until late the next day when his ship would again be in cell phone range. He lay rehearsing what he would say and sleep, although badly needed, did not come easily.

He must have dozed because the strident ringing of the internal telephone woke him at 2340 with a start. He answered and spoke the automatic response – ok, thanks, I'm on my way. He

washed the sleep from his eyes, pulled his overalls on and wearily made his way towards the engine control room.

The Senior Second was there before him, chirpy as usual. The handover with the off-going watchkeepers was routine, a few pleasantries and a bit of banter and he was soon alone with the Second and his thoughts. They chatted for a while but he had rounds to complete and so, at about 0045, he set off. The passenger ship was at sea in busy shipping lanes and so all the hydraulic

sliding watertight doors were closed. There were eleven to be passed on the standard engine room rounds and each one would take 40 seconds if the procedures were obeyed. Routinely they weren't when the Chief Engineer was not around.

Andreas carried out a circuit of the main machinery space and then began to pass through the auxiliary machinery rooms. He was carrying out routine checks automatically. His mind was partly back home with his fiancé as he approached the fifth door. He yawned as he flicked the lever: the door started to open. When it had opened a little way he set and locked the lever in the closing position and started to pass through. He was nearly clear

of the door when he hesitated; he had forgotten to check the calorifier. He turned to go back. When he was part way through the narrowing opening the wad of cotton waste in his back pocket caught temporarily on the upright of the door frame. The delay was momentary but catastrophic. He felt the door closing on his right thigh. Frantically he reached behind his back to grab the control lever but his flailing hand was unable to find it. He passed out with the pain as the door continued its devastating progress into its housing.

The passenger ship was at sea in busy shipping lanes and so all the hydraulic sliding watertight doors were closed

Introduction

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In a previous Issue of **Alert!** we have defined **Occupational Health and Safety** as:
The effect of work, the working environment and living conditions on the health, safety and wellbeing of the person.

The impact of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC 2006) - now supported by the *ILO Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of MLC 2006* - has brought the subject of seafarer health, safety and wellbeing to the fore; not least because it emphasises the rights of every seafarer to a safe and secure workplace that complies with safety standards; to fair terms of employment; to decent working and living conditions on board ship; and to health protection, medical care, welfare measures and other forms of social protection.

Much has been written in previous Issues of **Alert!** on occupational health, safety and wellbeing. The centrespread in Issue No. 18 offers an excellent A to Z guide to the subject, as

do the centrespreads in Issue No. 17 on mitigating the risks of slips, trips and falls, and Issue No. 13 on the causes, effects and mitigation of fatigue.

Understandably, the seafarer has to be both physically and mentally fit to cope with the demands of working and living at sea. He/she has to be able to cope with the loneliness and isolation of being at sea, often for lengthy contracts, with irregular contact with family at home; long hours can lead to fatigue and stress; language barriers amongst multi-national crews can lead to breakdowns in communication; and home-sickness, bullying and gender or racial discrimination can seriously affect self-confidence. These are all stressors, any combination of which can lead to lapses in safety; our cover story is but one example of what can go wrong if a seafarer is stressed.

The health, wellbeing and welfare of the seafarer is crucial to the safety of any ship.

"The health, wellbeing and welfare of the seafarer is crucial to the safety of any ship."

Reports & Studies

Ergonomics at Sea

Thomas Ask

The goal of ergonomic design is to allow interfaces to easily connect with a human and thereby reduce injuries and accidents. In this paper, Professor Ask argues that designs for marine applications need special care because of unique hazards, multicultural crew and the extreme human machine interface environment where small controls are operating enormous machinery.

Downloadable from:
www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01305

Email Management

Tipu Parvez

A short essay by an Operations Manager on how to manage emails when key personnel are on vacation.

Downloadable from:
www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01310

Lives in peril: Seafarers health and safety at risk

Carolyn Graham

An essay on seafarer health and safety.

Downloadable from:
www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01315

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Developing Seafarers' Welfare Boards in the 21st Century

Peter Tomlin, Deputy Chief Executive,
UK Merchant Navy Welfare Board
www.mnwb.org

Life at sea, even when a ship is alongside, has never been easy. In the 21st Century trends, such as ever smaller crew numbers, often from multicultural backgrounds, combined with short busy turnaround times in port, all impact on a seafarer's quality of life. The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006) recognises these issues and importantly the need for seafarers to have easy access to port welfare services. To help achieve this MLC, 2006 actively promotes and encourages all signatory states to establish seafarers' welfare boards in order to support port welfare services.

The concept and advantages of welfare boards, both national and local port welfare committees, have long been understood and encouraged. The oldest such organisation is believed to be the UK's Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) which, although established in 1948, can trace its origins back to 1928. Today the MNWB has 46 constituent members and it provides a range of services to its members including working groups, evaluations, training packages, a welfare referral service and grants. Key to helping support its work are 15 local welfare boards, known as *Port Welfare Committees* (PWCs) in the UK alongside another in Gibraltar and all are directly managed from the MNWB office in Southampton.

The role of MNWB has long been recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and they have used this as a template within Regulation and Recommendation 4.4 *Access to shore-based welfare facilities* of MLC 2006. Whilst this important piece of legislation is being increasingly ratified around the world, there are relatively few seafarers' welfare boards or port committees. Encouragingly, thanks to the convention, this is set to change and there is an increasing interest in establishing these at local, regional and national level.

The global umbrella organisation for seafarers' welfare is the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) who have commissioned MNWB to use their expertise to undertake a pilot project that will help establish at least five welfare boards in different locations around the world during 2015/16. The funding for this initiative comes from the ITF Seafarers' Trust and if it is successful, as is anticipated, then it is expected to lead to a much larger project.

MNWB will help its colleagues from other countries launch boards and port welfare committees by providing a starter pack, on-going



advice and mentoring. To undertake this project at such an important time, when there are so many changes in seafarers' lives and in port based welfare provision, this represents a huge challenge, but we at MNWB welcome the prospect of working to assist and mentor likeminded organisations from around the world, who will one day become our close colleagues.

Due to its global nature, the pilot has been launched with a bespoke website - www.portwelfare.org - inviting countries and ports to register an expression of interest to participate in the port welfare partnership initiative. We have already received numerous positive responses for help from over 25 countries and we welcome more. This project has an international executive committee that boasts Maritime Authority, Ship Owner, Ports, Unions and Voluntary Organisations representation, and they are looking forward to selecting the first and second tranche of beneficiaries.

The project also has the full support of well-known international voluntary organisations such as the Apostleship of the Sea, Mission to Seafarers and Sailors Society; all of whom provide a global network of seafarers' centres and ship visitors. Like MNWB they understand the benefits of ever closer collaboration, which will help to better support their roles. In every sense this can be described as a partnership project that will provide increased support for seafarers around the world.

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Exploring Occupational Health and Safety

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

The effect of work, the working environment and living conditions on the health, safety and wellbeing of the person

Codes, Guidelines & Advice

- ILO Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (ILO)
- ISM Code (as it applies to health and safety)
- ILO Code of Practice on accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port
- ILO Code of Practice on ambient factors in the workplace
- ILO Code of Practice on safety in the use of chemicals at work
- ILO Code of Practice on protection of workers against noise and vibration in the working environment
- ILO Code of Practice on the Management of alcohol and drug-related issues in the workplace
- ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work
- ILO Guidelines on the medical examinations of seafarers (ILO)
- Joint WHO/ILO briefing note for workers and employers on Ebola Virus Disease
- ICS basic advice for shipping companies and seafarers on implementing an effective safety culture
- IMO MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.3 Guidelines on the basic elements of a shipboard occupational health and safety programme
- International Medical Guide for Ships
- The Ship Captain's Medical Guide
- ISWAN Training on Board fitness Program
- The Mental Health of Seafarers
- Wellness at sea project
- Seafarers Centre Directory
- Port welfare partnership
- IMHA Member and Clinic Directory (which includes P&I Club approved PEME centres)
- ITF Seafarers Health Briefings
- ITF Seafarers Balance your diet briefing
- ILO Stress Prevention at Work Checkpoints

For a version of this Centrespread complete with website links go to: www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01330 or scan the QR Code



Health & Wellbeing

Personal health

- Health awareness
- Medical screening
- Pre-employment Medical Examination (PEME)
- Medical support
- Wellness at sea
- Fitness training
- Mental Health

Wellbeing

- Taking care of oneself and others
- Taking responsibility for personal learning and welfare
- Managing feelings
- Developing a positive and active attitude to life
- Building relationships with others
- Coping with isolation, loneliness and stress
- Recognising depression
- Dealing with fatigue
- Balanced diet
- Drug & alcohol testing
- Exercise
- Habitability
- Hygiene
- Medical screening
- Recreation
- Rest
- Energy
- Physical fitness
- Physical strength
- Stamina

Welfare

- Company family support structure
- Company family support information
- Staff suggestion schemes
- Communication with home

Issue No.13

Fatigue: Causes, effects and mitigation



Issue No.14

Mitigating slip, trip and fall hazards



Safety

Safe working practices

- Awareness of onboard occupational health and safety hazards
- Behavioural safety
- Permits to work
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
 - Provision
 - Maintenance
 - Accessibility
 - Proper use
- Enclosed space entry procedures

Safety culture

- Company culture
- No blame culture

Accidents

Recording

- Accident log
- Medical/Sick-Bay log

Reporting

- Health and safety reports
- Minutes of safety meetings
- Accident/near miss reports

Investigating

- Internal accident investigation
- Safety Accident investigation
- Flag State investigation
- P&I investigation

Feedback

- Safety posters
- Safety alerts/bulletins
- Confidential reporting scheme summaries
- Accident investigation reports
- Lessons learned



No.17 Preventing slip, trip and fall incidents



Issue No.18 The good guide to seafarer health, Safety and wellbeing



Issue No.32 The complete guide to ship manning



Wellness at Sea: Promoting onboard health and well-being

Vicky Macleod, Sailors' Society
www.sailors-society.org



areas of well-being: **Social, Emotional, Physical, Intellectual and Spiritual.**

Building on pioneering work into mental health and the unique social environment of the ship, and with an advisory group made up of industry leaders, *Wellness at Sea* is well placed to equip participants with the tools they need to maintain good general *wellness* at sea, alongside more familiar skills competence. The programme is aimed at early identification of mental health issues before they impact on seafarers' lives and the safety of the ship and its cargo, imparting knowledge and skills to equip those responsible for seafarers at sea.

Problems such as loneliness and separation from friends and family lead to many seafarers abandoning a seagoing career. By identifying these problems early and empowering masters and senior officers to deal with them as they arise, there is a much better chance of solving this problem.

Historically, training of seafarers has been focused on occupational skills, while welfare services have mostly been reactive, coming into play only once a problem arises. *Wellness at Sea* introduces a philosophy which argues that, to ably steer a ship from point A to point B, you also need cultural competence, emotional intelligence, social skills and spiritual well-being to name just a few.

The course is available at two levels: an Officer Programme and a Cadet Programme. Initially, *Wellness at Sea* Project Manager Johan Smith will run the course in five international locations: South Africa, Namibia, China, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, providing coaching in each of the five areas of wellness and empowering attendees to pass on the lessons they have learned to crew-mates and others under their command.

The programme consists of five modules based on the five areas of well-being. Participants will engage in practical and theoretical exercises exploring a range of issues including communication and managing conflict in the workplace, mental health identification and support, fitness on board, and basic seafarers' rights.

Wellness at Sea is designed to fill a vital need by recognising the importance to safety of a crew whose mental and spiritual needs are met. By choosing to be person-centred instead of problem-centred, the programme focuses on people - the centre point around which the industry revolves.

For more information visit:
www.sailors-society.org/wellness

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Sailors' Society, an international charity which supports merchant seafarers and their families, recently launched *Wellness at Sea*, a coaching programme designed to help seafarers look after their health and well-being on-board.

Wellness at Sea was developed in response to a call from the industry to address the issue of poor mental health and the associated risks that can arise as a result of a life at sea. The vast majority of incidents occurring at sea are often attributed to human error, a term that disguises a variety of underlying problems.

Fatigue, poor mental health, stress and many other issues can all affect seafarers going about their daily work. They can be the difference between safe transit and a major incident, the effects of which lead to crew attrition, risks in safety and efficiency, and costly re-routing of ships.

Sailors' Society recognised the need for a programme which seeks to combat these physical and mental health issues by addressing wellness as a holistic concept made up of five specific

Getting the word out on mental illness

Bob Iversen, Rotary Club of Melbourne South, Project Manager Seafarers' Mental Health

Getting information to seafarers on the touchy subject of mental illness can be done if the right people are involved.

In 2008 the international committee of the Rotary Club of Melbourne South visited the Mission to Seafarers in Melbourne to learn more about the mental health of seafarers on ships calling into Melbourne. The Mission's Chaplain told us of a Chief Engineer two months earlier: "We don't know what caused it, but the Chief Engineer became so depressed that he found a niche in the engine room and hung himself. This is not too common, but it is not unusual."

This got the committee to look for reports on seafarers' mental health; we found several from conferences in Poland that showed seafarers' mental health was a cause of concern. Further digging into reports on 17,026 seafarer deaths during 1960–2009 produced dreadful statistics. During those years there were 1,011 deaths by suicide – or 5.9% of all deaths. This is three or four times higher than the percentage of suicide deaths in 2011 in Australia (1.6%) or in the United Kingdom in 2011 (1.2%).

In 2009 the club decided to print booklets on depression and enlisted *beyondblue* - Australia's National Depression Initiative, www.beyondblue.org.au - to produce separate colourful eight page booklets in English, Chinese, Russian and Tagalog on the sole subject of depression. The first booklets went aboard ships in Melbourne in December, 2009; two further print runs have produced enough booklets to be placed on 14,000 ships in major Australian ports by 2016/2017.

The booklets discuss such subjects as: the mental health of seafarers; understanding depression; how to help a seafarer with depression/anxiety; and tips on reducing stress. It provides a *Depression Checklist* that asks a seafarer a number of key questions (see diagram).

The Rotary booklets and a flyer can be downloaded free of charge from http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/642707/20927526/1352510366320/MHOS_Leaflet.pdf?token=o8MufajYIGLKB3rhuDfp44aVFLY%3D

The booklets list telephone numbers to call for help in Australia, but seafarers anywhere in the world can contact *SeafarerHelp* - for contact details, see the diagram.

A copy of Bob Iversen's paper *The mental health of seafarers* can be downloaded from: www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01320

To download a copy of the *Depression Checklist* scan the QR Code or go to: www.he-alert.org/docs/published/he01325



Depression Checklist

To find out if you, or someone you know may have depression, complete the checklist below.

For more than **TWO WEEKS** have you: Tick if Yes

1. Felt sad, down or miserable most of the time?
2. Lost interest or pleasure in most of your usual activities?

If you answered 'YES' to either of these questions, complete the symptom checklist below. If you did **not** answer 'YES' to either of these questions, it is unlikely that you have a depressive illness.

3. Lost or gained a lot of weight? OR Had a decrease or increase in appetite?
4. Sleep disturbance?
5. Felt slowed down, restless or excessively busy?
6. Felt tired or had no energy?
7. Felt worthless? OR Felt excessively guilty? OR Felt guilt about things you should not have been feeling guilty about?
8. Had poor concentration? OR had difficulties thinking? OR Were very indecisive?
9. Had recurrent thoughts of death?

Add up the number of ticks for your score: _____

What does your score mean?

(assuming you answered 'YES' to question 1 and/or question 2)

4 or less: Unlikely to have a depressive illness

5 or more: Likely to have a depressive illness

For further assessment, or if you are concerned about any of these symptoms, please consult a doctor or another health professional.

References: American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. 4th ed (DSM-IV. Washington, DC: APA. 1994, and International classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision, Geneva, World Health Organisation, 1992-1994.

For more information about depression, visit the **beyondblue website at www.beyondblue.org.au**

Seafarers anywhere in the world can contact *SeafarerHelp* for 24/7 Assistance, 365 days per year:

www.seafarerhelp.org

Skype: Info-seafarerhelp.org

Tel: +44 20 7323737 and request call-back

SMS: +44 7624 818 405 Email: help@seafarerhelp.org

The ILO Guidelines for Occupational Safety and Health

Brian Sherwood Jones, Process Contracting Limited, a member of the CyClaDes project
www.cyclades-project.eu

In 2014, the ILO published Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention. They were formally endorsed by the ILO Governing Body in March 2015.

The Guidelines should bring about a more comprehensive approach to risk management than that current under ISM. The requirement for Plan-Do-Check-Act continuous improvement will be familiar to many (e.g. from TMSA) but should help to stop compliance cultures e.g. by updating risk assessments as circumstances change.

Hazards to be addressed include the long- and short-term effects of ambient factors (exposure to noise, vibration, lighting, ultraviolet (UV) light, non-ionizing radiation and extreme temperatures).

The hazards inherent to working onboard pose serious risks. They include means of access, asbestos-related risks, work in enclosed spaces, use of equipment and machinery such as loading/unloading, anchoring, docking and mooring, dangerous cargo and ballast.

The hazards from poor ergonomic design are addressed, including those related to manual handling. Testing, risk assessment and the use of preventive principles are required. The preventive principles combat risk at source, and use the following risk control hierarchy:

- eliminate the hazard
- substitute a less hazardous material or process
- isolate the hazard at source
- technical and engineering controls
- organisational controls

Reliance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) comes last.

The requirements for reporting and investigating accidents and injuries could bring about a significant change. In addition, there are requirements for learning from accidents.

Readers will be familiar with the ILO *Code of Practice on accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port*. This is joined by Codes of Practice on:

- *Ambient factors in the workplace*
- *Safety in the use of chemicals at work*
- *Protection of workers against noise and vibration in the working environment*
- *Management of alcohol- and drug-related issues in the workplace*
- *HIV/AIDS and the world of work*

To access these Codes of Practice go to: <http://ilo.org/safework/info/standards-and-instruments/codes/lang--en/index.htm>

The risk-based approach to safety in the MLC contrasts with the prescriptive approach adopted in much of SOLAS. How the inevitable contradictions and conflicts will be resolved is unclear. The hope must be for a comprehensive risk-based approach supported by prescription where useful, going beyond SOLAS where appropriate. Much will depend on how national legislation is implemented and enforced.

There is no formal obligation on design offices to follow the preventive principles in workspace design. Presumably, owners will ask designers for a risk assessment, and an assessment of how the design meets the preventive principles. Ship design that took the preventive principles seriously could be very different.

In summary, the Guidelines offer shipping the chance to adopt the sort of comprehensive risk-based approach to health and safety that land-based Westerners have enjoyed. They represent a great opportunity, and it would be tragic if their use became just another paperwork exercise.

To download a copy of the ILO *Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention* go to: www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/WCMS_325319/lang--en/index.htm

The requirements for reporting and investigating accidents and injuries could bring about a significant change

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