

HSR training needs

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How Health and Safety Representatives can help their organisations with onboard OHS

The Occupational Health and Safety (Maritime Industry) Act 1993 under section 47 (1) a Health and Safety Representative must undertake training that has been accredited by the Seacare authority for this purpose, and (2) states the Operator must permit the HSR time off work to attend without any loss of remuneration or entitlements.

This Seafarers curriculum allows the HSR to be knowledgeable in the required legislation and responsibility placed on them but most importantly in Hazard Identification, Risk assessment and Control Processes. The Act, however, is also quite clear on the fact that it is the responsibility of the Operator to take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety at work of all employees and to support the HSR.

The Act also requires the operator to provide and maintain a safe working environment that is safe for all employees and without risk to their health and safety. It also identifies the working arrangements which require interaction, consultation and co-operation in the Workplace. These arrangements include:

- the establishment of designated work groups,
- the selection and training of health and safety representatives,
- the development of maritime specific OHS policies and agreements and
- setting up and training of OHS Committees.

The Act through various different sections 48-52 offers support and protection as well as responsibilities and powers to the HSR in their Leadership role, and gives them the power to effectively manage the responsibilities of such a position. However, the role of the HSR is not without checks and balances also covered by the act in sections 53-56 which document some of the limits of powers for the HSR.

The Act sets out the responsibilities and functions of the Health & Safety Representative. The role of such persons is essential in the organisation's endeavour to provide sustainable safe work practices and work conditions throughout each workplace and operational site. Along with the Act there are many other associated documents that will assist the Health and Safety Representative effectively manage and performs their functions, none more important than the Seacare HSR Handbook.

In terms of onboard health and safety, there is also the ISM (International Safety Management code) which requires the operator to provide for safe practices and a safe working environment in ship operation and to establish safeguards against all identified risks.

Onboard the Master takes on the responsibility of the operator to ensure that health, safety and welfare systems are in place and that crew members have the knowledge and training to comply with safe work practices and follow the vessels safety procedures. The Master and the Officers cannot achieve these responsibilities without the commitment of the crew and most importantly without the HSR and the OHS Committee. The HSR with the appropriate training will always be an integral part of the OHS team on board.

The HSR can assist the organization to meet its OHS requirements in many ways. By far the most important contribution of the HSR is to set an example to the rest of the crew to emulate and follow. For the HSR to lead by example is provided for in section 27 (2) of the Act. For example:

HIRAC (Hazard Identification Risk Assessment and Control processes).

One of the processes that an HSR can assist the Master and the crew with their functions is assisting in the identification of Hazards and Risks and to give some feedback to those undertaking Hazard & Risk identification and to give positive and constructive negative feedback to get it right first time every time.

- Assisting with practical solutions to an issue.
- Assisting with the Hazard & Risk Assessments Processes.
- While working demonstrate adherence to safe working procedures, and adherence to their Duty of Care not only to themselves but to the crew.
- Explaining to the crew what are the Human costs (the consequences of not following the vessels safety system).
- Assisting with the development of shipboard OHS measures.

The Health and Safety Representative is a Safety Leader

The definition of a leader is someone who heads, manages, takes charge, organizes, directs, facilitates, and guides and is someone who other persons will follow. Given the opportunity, support, and mandate, the HSR can be an effective leader. The HSR is trained in Statute laws, common laws, company requirement, Hazard and Risk assessment processes and therefore can demonstrate their skills and knowledge and leads by example.

An effective leader must be able to communicate both verbally and in writing, and the HSR can demonstrate effective communication with the master, officers, crew, and Designated Work Groups regarding OHS issues, concerns and the most sensible practical control measures that should be undertaken.

An effective Safety leader could be creative in handling OHS problems: Every HSR faces OHS issues from time to time. Organisations can only hope and expect that these are dealt with promptly by the officers or department heads. This is, however, not always the case. Hence, the HSR is required to deal with the issue, be this of an individual nature, or it is to do with group issues or non compliance issues with the ship's master. The ability of the HSR to creatively find a solution will determine the success or failure of the ship's OHS safety system.

The key for the HSR is to use their knowledge and communication skills obtained through their training and life skills to proactively encourage consultation and discussion whereby solutions can come from the actual Designated work group (DWG). With training undertaken, HSR are trained in different ways to effectively handle problems and to encourage other crew members to want to work safely.

An effective Safety leader acts in the best interest of all parties as part of their Duty of Care. The HSR play an integral part in the practice of safety culture on board, and must at all times be above board and empathetic and apathetic at times when dealing with issues. They must not be one sided or have a hatred towards the Master or his Officers or the organization.

Shipping companies have their own Safety Management Systems that follow International and Australian standards, and the HSR is well aware of the importance placed on complying with OHS procedures and policies. HSR must consistently perform their tasks in accordance with these procedures. This will then demonstrate their own commitment to the overall safety performance and in turn, will demonstrate to the crew members that documented procedures are an integral part of the safety culture and working environment and that these must be followed by all on board at all times.

The HSR must consistently encourage safe work practices and safe working conditions and to encourage the reporting of any hazards or risks that could impact on the safety of any vessel or persons on board.

The HSR is to support and encourage the consultative process. The Legislation stipulates it Consultation is a means of encouragement; it costs time and money but this is only a minimal cost to everyone when compared to the overall wellness of the organisation and its workforce.

**YOU WILL ONLY ACHIEVE THE LEVEL OF SAFETY THAT YOU DEMONSTRATE YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE.
REMEMBER ZERO INCIDENTS ON MY WATCH**

Summary :

Work related illnesses, injuries, environmental mishaps, loss of production, loss of business, legal proceedings, higher insurance premiums, industrial unrest and low morale are what can be expected if Health and Safety in the workplace is not managed like other critical aspects of a business.

Statistics show that occupational illnesses and injury are not just numbers making up hospital and health statistics. These represent someone's Sons, Daughters, Father, Mother, Uncle, Aunt or someone very dear and close who have been harmed, injured or disabled at work. This is a human cost and it is the best reason for getting serious about occupational health and safety and reducing all injuries and incidents that have the potential to hurt, maim or kill an employee.

Who is responsible for Safety

The usual statement is "It is not my problem". However, in reality, it is everyone's problem.

Employers and Employees benefit through a safer, healthier Workplace, with reductions in injuries, illness, as well as through the increased job satisfaction and employment stability that comes from effective teamwork. Employers can benefit from the resulting high level of staff morale, reduced operating costs, fewer work stoppages, increased productivity, higher key performance outcomes, better services and improved competitiveness position.

Remember, we were all young once and had little knowledge of Health, Safety and duty of care. But, we learnt by listening and learning to our older generation, our fathers and mothers and especially our safety professionals, be this a Safety Officer or the HSR. All of us play a significant role in the

implementation of a successful Occupational Health and Safety Program at work.

Can the HSR assist their organisation and value add to it and can they be safety leaders? The answer is **Yes** many times over. Given the chance, support and assistance, all HSR give their time and energy to facilitate good learning skills and try to work with many Masters, be this the Master of the vessel or their Master commonly known as other employees who may demand a lot from their HSR, be it time, a good caring ear, a good mouthpiece, but the best of all a sense of confidence and assurance that the HSR will lead them in the right direction to Good Health and Safety.

Statement ; A dog is only as good as his Master, reverse this and the HSR is only as good as his Master will let him be. (Who is the Master?).

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