

How can a Health and Safety Representative assist its company with its onboard OHS?

The *Occupational Health and Safety (Maritime Industry) Act 1993* requires that HSR are to be trained by attending an accredited training course. This Seacare curriculum requires the HSR to be knowledgeable in the required legislation and responsibility placed on them but most importantly in Hazard identification assessment and control.

But the Act is quite clear that it is the responsibility of the Operator to take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety at work of employees. It also requires that the operator must provide and maintain a working environment that is safe for employees and without risk to their health. 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 OHS Committees. It sets out the responsibilities and functions of Health & Safety Representative. The role of such persons is essential in the endeavour to provide sustainable safe work practices and work conditions throughout each workplace and operational site. We also have the ISM code which requires the operator to provide for safe practices in ship operation and a safe working environment and establish safeguards against all identified risks.

Onboard the Master takes on the responsibility of the operator to ensure the systems are in place and that crew members comply with safe working practices and follow the vessels safety procedures. The Master and the officers cannot achieve these responsibilities without the commitment of the crew but most importantly the HSR. The HSR has been provided with the training and is an integral part of the OHS team on board.

The HSR can assist its company to meet its OHS requirements in many ways but the most important is to set an example to the rest of the crew. This is done by being leading by example and following section 27 (2) of the Act.

Don't create a risk or increase a risk (whether by doing something or failing to do something).

- Following procedures.
- Assisting with practical solutions to an issue.
- Assisting with the ships Risk Assessments Processes.
- While working demonstrate adherence to safe working procedures

- Explain 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.

HSR are provided with the training and the resources therefore must demonstrate that commitment to safety.

How can a Health and Safety Representative be a Safety Leader?

The definition of a leader is someone who leads or persons follow. I believe that a HSR can be that person. HSR's have been trained in legislation, risk management and therefore have the skills to lead by example.

An effective leader must be able to communicate:

This is part of the HRS role to effectively communicate to the crew, officers, safety committee and the DPA regarding OHS concerns and the most practical control measures.

An effective Safety leader is creative in handling OHS problems:

Every HSR faces OHS issues from time to time; hopefully they are dealt promptly by the officers or department heads. But this is not the case always so the HSR is required to deal with the issue. The ability to creatively find a solution will determine the success or failure of the ship OHS safety system. The key is for HSR's to use their knowledge and communication skills obtained through their training to proactively encourage consultation and discussion whereby solutions can come from the actual DWG. Within training HSR are shown different ways to handle problems and how to encourage other crew members to want to work safely.

An effective Safety leader acts consistently:

HSR are an integral part of the safety culture on board. Each shipping company has its Safety Quality Management System and the HSR is well aware of the importance placed on complying with OHS procedures and policies.

The HSR must consistently perform their task in accordance with these procedures. This demonstrates commitment to the overall safety system but show the rest of the crew members that procedures are important and will not be broken.

The HSR must consistently encourage safe work practices and safe working conditions.

The HSR must consistently encourage the reporting of hazards and Near Hits.

The HSR must consistently encourage the consultative process. The Legislation requires it and Consultation is cheap, it does not cost money but does require time to Listen, encourage acknowledgment of the crews' commitment and efforts in solving OHS issues.

YOU WILL ONLY ACHIEVE THE LEVEL OF SAFETY THAT YOU DEMONSTRATE YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

This is the case for all offices and department heads.

Summary

Work related illness, injury, environmental mishaps, loss of production, loss of business, legal proceedings, higher insurance premiums, industrial unrest and low moral is what can be expected if Health and safety is not managed like other critical aspects of a business.

But statistics about occupational illness and injury are not just numbers; they represent our crew members who have been harmed at work. This is a human cost and it's the best reason there is for getting serious about occupational health and safety.

Everyone's Business

Employees benefit through a safer, healthier Workplace, with less injuries, illness, as well as through the increased job satisfaction and employment stability that comes from effective teamwork. Employers can benefit from lower operating costs, increased productivity, better services and improved competitiveness position.

Remember that all of us play a significant role in the implementation of a successful Occupational Health and Safety Program.

Yes HSR can assist their company and yes can be safety leaders but this can only be achieved if the operator creates the working environment for it to occur.

Good health and safety management benefits everyone. Good health and safety management means working together – Operators, Masters, Officers, crew and yes you Safety Reps.