



SAN NEWS

Work environment news & regulations within the Shipping Community

2/05

Difficult but important to be a good leader on board

A sound work environment requires good leadership. However, being a capable leader is a difficult task, not least on board a ship.

"Almost everyone claims that their workplace is special, but the only case in which I can sincerely agree is when it comes to mariners," says social worker Elizabeth Frey at Perema AB.

Due to the small crews that are common these days, every single crewmember is important for the overall atmosphere on board. The ship's officers have to shoulder the greatest responsibility for creating a sound environment on board. Clear, fair and empathetic superiors make for happy employees who feel secure both in a professional capacity and in social situations. The team spirit is improved and work becomes more efficient. Elizabeth Frey has dealt with leadership issues in shipping for 15 years. She observes that there are many capable ship's officers on board Swedish ships. However, she has also seen several examples of the opposite, which does not surprise her in the least.



Elizabeth Frey, social worker at Perema AB

"The role of the officer is twofold. On the one hand, he has to carry out orders given by his superiors, i.e. the shipping company management. On the other hand, he has to be a leader, which entails rallying the crew. These two roles are difficult to combine particularly on board a ship, where you have to answer for your decisions round the clock."

Crew management on board is made more difficult by the fact that the crew both work and live on board. They are forced to share a restricted environment with people they have not chosen themselves, and those who are unhappy with the way things are run cannot go home at the end of the day and talk to their families and fri-

ends about their opinions. The ship's officers are part of this environment and being able to combine sound leadership with social relations requires a good deal of integrity and good judgement on their part.

"I don't think the ship's officers can or should detach themselves from the community on board altogether. However, it is important to know where to draw the line and a certain distance inspires respect. For example, it is completely acceptable to go ashore and join the crew for a pint, but not to get drunk," says Elizabeth Frey.

According to Elizabeth Frey, the predominantly male workforce is another problem that faces the ship's officers.

"The psychosocial work environment is not always very well developed in predominantly male workplaces. Men are often reluctant to talk to each other about feelings and many prefer to 'look away and keep a stiff upper lip' rather than tackle the problems."

In Elizabeth Frey's opinion there are no manuals describing what a good officer should be like. However, she mentions a

few rules of thumb that one should follow in order to be seen as a good supervisor. The first rule is never to speak ill of the shipping company.

"To go behind the employer's back can give a few points in the short term among the crew who might think that 'this bloke is on our side'. Still, an officer is part of the shipping company and after a while the crew will start to question why he or she does not try to rectify the problem instead of just griping about it."

"Don't be afraid to agree with the crew and say: 'I think that's a problem as well, I'll see if I can do something about it'," she continues. "Avoid comments such as: 'those damn idiots don't understand anything'. Unfortunately, this type of comment isn't that uncommon."

Another rule that should always be followed is never to betray a person's confidence. A crewmember who needs to discuss his or her problems has to know that what is being said will not spread on board.

"Unfortunately it is common in workplaces both ashore and at sea that confi- →



To be around the colleagues round the clock makes it more difficult to be a good leader.



Disagreement on work environment monitoring

The issue of who is best equipped to monitor the work environment on board vessels is being discussed at the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. A decision is expected in the near future.

The Swedish Maritime Administration is responsible for ensuring that the Work Environment Act is being followed on board, while the Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA) handles monitoring of land-based companies. However, the maritime unions are pushing for a change and believe that SWEA also should take charge of the monitoring on board vessels.

"Who is in charge of monitoring is extremely important," says Christer Themnér, Managing Director at the Merchant Marine Officers' Association. "We want to see the task handled by professional work environment experts with references from land-based companies."

The issue of changes to the division of responsibility for monitoring was

brought up at the Merchant Marine Officers' Association conference in 2004 and is supported by the other two maritime unions. The employers and the Swedish Maritime Administration, on the other hand, want to continue using the current system.

"Vessels should be regarded as a whole. There are interfaces that could be very difficult to handle if monitoring of work environment and safety were divided between different authorities," explains Johan Franson, Maritime Safety Manager at the Swedish Maritime Administration.

The issue is currently being discussed at the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, and a decision could be given even before the summer holiday season.

"The proposal will either be rejected or subject to further analysis," says Margaretha Granborg at the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. "These are the only possible decisions that I can see being made."

Linda Sundgren

New agreement gives more efficient monitoring

A new co-operation agreement was signed last year between the Swedish Maritime Administration and the Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA). The new agreement succeeds the old agreement signed in 1969 and will give the Swedish Maritime Administration inspectors sufficient assistance to be able to monitor that the Work Environment Act is being complied with on board.

Several areas where the authorities could join forces are mentioned in the agreement. Such areas include: at the

request of any party, for particular theme inspections or when a safety representative has called attention to unsatisfactory conditions.

"The new agreement is more comprehensive than the old, and I believe our co-operation will become more intense," says Anders Bergström, legal representative at SWEA. "We have already started to train the Maritime Administration inspectors in work environment issues."

Linda Sundgren

Difficult but important, continued

dences are betrayed. Often this is done with the best of intentions – people want to discuss the problem with a third party in order to find a solution. However, if it gets out that a person has leaked information, that person will never be trusted with anything in confidence again," says Elizabeth Frey.

The third and last of her rules of thumb is to avoid intimate relationships between superiors and their subordinates. This includes both romantic attachments and overly close friendships. Personal relationships blur the boundaries of work-related roles and create uncertainty in general.

"The situation is particularly serious if a ship's officer is married to one of the subordinates or has a 'secret affair' with somebody, seeing as everyone else will know about it anyway. In such cases it is impossible to maintain clear boundaries between officers and crew."

"On board the ferries it is fairly common with relationships between crewmembers and I know that these at least used to be regarded as a problem. Many land-based companies have particular rules for this side of the work environment, and this could also be a viable solution at sea."

Bad leadership creates problems on board, but sometimes also for the employer. The problems can include additional costs due to sick leave or the need to transfer employees due to unhappiness with the work environment. Work on board can also become less efficient. Elizabeth Frey thinks that the shipping companies should invest more in management training to strengthen the officers in their roles. She compares shipping to companies like Volvo, which provides all its managers with a 20-day management training course.

"Almost all larger land-based companies invest a great deal in training their managers and in this area shipping companies are still a step behind. They focus too much on short-term profit instead of investing in training that will generate profit in the long term."

Elizabeth Frey is also of the opinion that open channels between the officers and shipping company offices are needed. In order for the officers to be able to do a good job, they need the support of the organisation ashore.

"As the ship's officers should not discuss problems relating to the crew with anyone on board, they should be able to turn to the shipping company. However, many shipping companies do not communicate enough with the officers. It seems they are not aware of the importance of communication."

Linda Sundgren

On a fairly regular basis, the Maritime Safety Inspectorate publishes information on incidents and messages that the shipping industry may find interesting. Below is a selection of items from the latest report. The texts are also available in unabbreviated form on the Swedish Maritime Administration, www.sjofartsverket.se, under the heading Maritime Safety Inspection.

Fatal accident when welding

The welding safety arrangements on board a vessel included gas pipes. The valves for the pipe system were built into a cabinet fixed to the wall, which after modernisation was equipped with only two relatively small drilled holes in the bottom of the cabinet. Welding was carried out near the cabinet. Suddenly a loud explosion could be heard. The cabinet had exploded and the welder was badly injured by parts from the cabinet. He later died from the injuries.

Welding gas had most likely leaked out. An explosive mixture of acetylene and oxygen was formed and ignited by the welding. The ventilation in the cabinet was deficient. There should be possibilities for circulation through relatively large vent holes, both in the top and bottom parts of the cabinet. The cabinets should also not be too tightly dimensioned.

BSU Investigation report 330/03

Position problems in integrated equipment

According to information provided by the US Coast Guard, unreliable position data may be given when the 'manual offset position' setting is used in the GPS receiver. The error occurs in a peripheral instrument, to which the GPS receiver sends the position data. The error can occur in receivers Furuno GP80 and Furuno GP90. The problem can be avoided by preventing the use of manual offset input. It is also possible to detach the GPS receiver from the peripheral equipment, but in that case the benefits of integration are lost. Thus the method should only be used as a temporary solution.

A copy of the US Coast Guard Safety Alert can be ordered from the Maritime Safety Inspectorate Inspection Unit at +46 (0)11 19 10 00. The supplier can also provide information directly.

Iu, USCG Safety Alert 1-05

MOB boat dropped into the sea

When taking aboard a rapid rescue boat (MOB boat), the boat came loose from its suspension device. The boat dropped into the sea with a crewmember on board. However, he sustained no injuries. Upon closer inspection it became evident that some nuts had come loose and, consequently, the bolts had slipped out. Furthermore, inspection of these details was not included in the user instructions for the device. The boat was of model Pacific 22 NK III, Osborne Rescue Boat Company, United Kingdom. Those who carry such boats are urged to check the suspension device and make sure that the inspection of the device is included in the service manual.

General recommendations for all rescue boats include:

- Make sure that inspections include all delicate components.
- Inspect all vital parts carefully.

Iu, USCG Safety Alert 2-05

Embargo placed on many Swedish vessels

In 2004 embargo was placed on a relatively large number of Swedish vessels in connection with port state controls. A total of eleven vessels (nine within the Paris MoU) were berthed for a certain period of time, which is the highest number in five years. A total of 36 embargos and 92 deficiencies calling for embargo have been issued in the past five years. 35 of the 92 deficiencies were connected to navigational equipment/safety. Eleven concerned bilge water separators/MARPOL.

24 were issued due to lack of documentation. Original certificates of qualification were missing or certificates had not been renewed in time. According to statistics, the most efficient ways to avoid being issued with embargo are:

- to ensure that all paperwork is in order and
- to check that the bilge water separator is in working order.

Iu

Unsecured cargo sent forks through shell plating

A ro-ro vessel was caught in bad weather. A number of large crates came loose and crushed other cargo in the hold. The lashings of one of the vessel's forklifts were



also torn. The forklift started to move and ran straight into the shell plating. The forks went through the plating on either side of a frame and poked right through to the outside. The frame stopped the whole forklift from going through the plating.

The cargo in the crates was not properly lashed, nor were the crates securely lashed to the ship. In addition, oil had leaked from the equipment, which made the crates glide around more easily.

The importance of lashing the cargo securely cannot be over-emphasised. This is true particularly of heavy cargo, which can be extremely dangerous if set in motion.

Iu, no. 080201-05-15314

Engine-room telegraph complemented by intern communication

After a number of accidents involving vessels using an older type of engine room telegraph (where calls for manoeuvre are made from the bridge and the engine room crew carries out the manoeuvre), the communication between bridge and engine room has been discussed in a professional interest group organisation that represents most of the vessels involved. Vagueness or other causes seem to have resulted in the manoeuvre not corresponding to the call from the bridge.

The interest group organisation has drafted the following recommendations:

- By complementing the standard engine room telegraph with another mode of communication, the correctness of the orders given can be guaranteed.

- The system should be two-way and the recipient should be able to reply without lifting a receiver or pressing a button.

- The system should be independent of the regular power supply and complemented by an alarm (optical and/or audible).

All routines should be well documented in the ship's SMS manual.

Iu, no. 080201-04-16662

Many exceptions to the Tobacco Act on board passenger vessels



Since 1 June smoking is banned in bars and restaurants. However, when it comes to passenger vessels there are several exceptions to this rule. Ferries in foreign traffic are not affected by the ban at all and even on boats in domestic traffic the act can be circumvented.

The Tobacco Act was introduced in 1993, based on better knowledge regarding the perils of passive smoking. By banning smoking in workplaces and certain public places, people were not subjected to unhealthy tobacco smoke during working hours.

From 1 June this year, the legislation has been further tightened to include restaurants and other premises where food and drink are served. From now on, a restaurateur who wants to let his guests smoke has to provide a closed smoking area. For passenger vessels the ban is not as far-reaching. Restaurants on board vessels that call to foreign ports are not affected by the amended legislation at all, which means that the ban does not concern traffic to Denmark and Finland. The new regulations concern boats in domestic traffic, but the smoking ban is not enforced completely.

"This is due to that the new and old parts of the Tobacco Act are not properly synchronised," explains Anna Östbom at the Swedish National Institute of Public Health. The new regulations, which concern restaurants, are very strict and require either a total smoking ban or completely closed smoking areas. The old regulations, which concern smoking on other public premises, are less restrictive.

For a vessel with two passenger decks,

with restaurants upstairs and seating downstairs, the basic rule is that smoking is banned on the upper restaurant deck. However, if the entire deck is not taken up by the restaurant facilities, smoking can be allowed in certain areas, as the old regulations are valid for them. Lower deck, where no food is being served, is ruled by the old regulations and thus smoking can also be allowed there.

"The legislation must be interpreted on a per case basis and the interior of the vessel is what decides where smoking can be allowed," says Anna Östbom.

Linda Sundgren

Sweden – not a forerunner

Many countries have beaten us to the introduction of a smoking ban in restaurants. Here are some examples: South Africa, first in the world in 1999
Ireland, March 2004
Norway, June 2004
Italy, January 2005
Malta, April 2005
Bhutan has introduced the most radical legislation and made it illegal to sell cigarettes since 2004

Help your crew to quit smoking

The Swedish Heart and Lung Foundation has released a concept to help quit smoking (Rökfri på jobbet – No smoking in the workplace). The package can be ordered from Strömberg distribution by phone on +46 (0)8 449 88 22 for SEK 200. It can also be downloaded from the web at www.tobakslagen.org

~ IN SHORT ~

Newly graduated officers satisfied with their jobs

92 of the 100 ship's officer students who graduated between 2000 and 2003 are employed. 69 of them hold a post as first officer or master, while the rest are otherwise employed. All except two are satisfied with the job situation. These are the results of a recent market survey carried out by Chalmers Institute of Technology.

Few situations vacant for mariners

Since August last year, the employment office for mariners has been able to provide only occasional vacancies.

"The situation has not been this bad since the autumn of 1994," says Lea Diouvaire at the employment office in Stockholm.

No anonymity in the Naval Forces reporting

The navy has introduced a new system for deviation reporting. The system is in many ways similar to its merchant shipping counterpart, INSJÖ. The idea is to attend to shortcomings before they lead to accidents as well as to learn by your own mistakes and those of others. The most notable difference between the systems is that the information in the navy's system is not anonymous, as it is in INSJÖ.



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