



One accident is one too many

This is the line of reasoning at tanker shipping company Broström, where a zero tolerance policy regarding accidents in the workplace has been applied for the past couple of years.

"Our dream is that our entire personnel would read our quality manual every evening," says Kenneth Thorén, Personnel Manager at Broström.

In a heavily monitored and regulated industry like tanker shipping, safety is always in the forefront.

Frequent inspections and high safety requirements by the cargo owners push the shipping companies to continuous improvement, such as to reduce the number of accidents in the workplace.

"We have never had a lot of accidents so we are not looking at any drastic changes, but there is always room for improvement," explains Kenneth Thorén.

Out of Broström's approximately 400 on-board personnel, less than ten persons a year suffer an accident in the workplace. The zero tolerance policy was introduced two years ago, and even if the number of accidents remains the same, there seems to be more awareness among the personnel.

"We receive many more reports on issues that could lead to accidents, which is very important," says Kenneth Thorén.

The shipping company's quality management system is the point of focus in the fight against accidents. At officers' conferences and other meetings with the crew there is almost always talk about the quality management manual, which describes how work can be carried out safely. However, reducing the number of accidents cannot be achieved without effort and, according to Kenneth Thorén, one of the main obstacles is the attitudes of the staff.

"There is a whole generation who was brought up to think along the lines of 'one hand for yourself and one for the ship'. However, we do not reward speed at the expense of safety."

The shipping company has seen clear indications that some of the safety routines on board are being neglected.



Photo: Bruno Jessen, 3 Præmie Nordisk Fotokonkurrence 1989

"We have had a couple of cases where younger, newly appointed masters have requested a transfer because they believe that the crew does not follow the safety regulations," says Kenneth Thorén.

In order to improve the safety awareness on board a new post has been created for an active officer at the company offices. For a period of six months somebody, usually a chief officer, will work in the office and learn about the quality management work starting from the basics.

"When this person later returns to his post on board, we will have an excellent spokesperson for our quality and safety work. We will also get an insight into what is happening on board and the understanding of what we do at the office will improve," explains Kenneth Thorén.

"Right now we also have a chief officer who, since he completed his work at the office, spends his time visiting all our vessels and discussing quality and safety with the crews, which has been very well received. If I had done it I'm sure it would have been seen more as a lecture."

The crew has a key role in the quality work and the on-board personnel are needed in order to develop the quality effort;

it is the mariners who see how the rules work in practice.

"A quality management system is very much an evolving product undergoing constant change. The system is devised by office personnel - even if many of us have worked at sea at one time or another - and that is why the crew's input is very important," says Kenneth Thorén.

The oil companies play a major role in the safety work at Broström. Although the cargo owners take up a lot of the crew's time in port, Kenneth Thorén is pleased with the stringent control.

"At first there was a lot of grumbling about all the inspections. But I think that meeting the demands of the cargo owners is the best way to improve standards in the merchant fleet, and that does not only apply to tankers."

According to Kenneth Thorén, there is really no limit to how much the safety and quality work can cost. At least not as long as the demands come from the cargo owners.

"It is all about our livelihood. If we cannot meet the oil companies' demands we have no place on the market."

Linda Sundgren

Shipping companies neglect noise measurements

Persons who are subjected to noise run the risk of suffering sleeping disorders, cardiovascular disease and tinnitus. However, noise measurements are often neglected on board.

The noise levels on board should be relatively well documented, since there have been requirements on noise measurements on all newbuildings and vessels under Swedish flag since the early 1970s. In reality this is not the case.

"The shipping companies have not handled the measurements very well and far from everybody sends us their reports. And we have not exactly campaigned for the issue either," says Leif Rehmal at the Swedish Maritime Administration.

He hopes that the new work environment regulations, which are due to be launched at the turn of the year, will improve the situation.

"I cannot give any guarantees for that it will happen. However, in recent years we have been more assertive about demanding measurements in newbuildings."

Noise can cause serious damage, such as tinnitus, impaired hearing, sleeping disorders and cardiovascular disease. At what level noise becomes harmful depends on how high it is, the period of exposure and the general condition of

the person subjected to it. Birgitta Berglund is professor of perception and psychophysics at Stockholm University and works at Karolinska Institutet. In the 1990's she took part in WHO's work to draw up guidelines for community noise. She believes that the risk of cardiovascular disease increases if we are subjected to a noise level of 65 decibels on a daily basis, whereas sleeping disorders can appear with noise levels of only 30 decibels. In workplaces the threshold value for hearing impairment is 85 decibels.

"The threshold value applies to workplaces with an exposure time of eight hours daily over 40 years. How the body reacts to vibrations and noise 24 hours a day, which can be the case on board, is something we know a lot less about," she says.

Linda Sundgren

New EU directives

Current threshold values have been questioned in recent years, and not long ago the EU issued new noise directives. According to the new directives, the employer must supply hearing protection when the noise level reaches 80 decibels. The directive came into force in February 2006.

THE CHAIRMAN IS SPEAKING

Shipping – on whose terms?

On the 27th of October the annual SAN conference was held in Gothenburg. In as much as quite a few brows on various foreheads could be detected whilst discussing the shortcomings of the ISPS code in particularly Northamerican ports, quite a few laughs could be heard when the lecturers talked about modern lifestyle onboard ships today, with a special eye towards food and modern cooking. I wish to thank all the contributing lecturers for their time, efforts and great performances they provided us with.

I also wish to ensure all the readers of SAN-Nytt that we shall never cease to strive towards a situation where seafarers are treated with the respect and dignity they so well deserve whilst carrying on with their duties in all various corners of the world. Shipping has been in the forefront of the industry when it comes to ensuring operative port security through the ISPS code. The time has now come for the rest of the world to acknowledge the contribution made by the shipping community, and in particular the sometimes pressing work in this area carried out on a daily basis by our seafarers all over the world, in order to ensure a better and hopefully safer world for us all to live in.



Captain Pieter Sprangers/Chairman SAN

Right protection can save your hearing

While the hearing problems in the engine room are on the decrease, it is a growing problem among the deck crew, particularly among those who work on ro-ro deck while loading and unloading. This is due to the fact that it is not as natural to wear hearing protection on deck as it is in the engine room.

It can be difficult to choose the right hearing protection, as the choice is ample. That is why it is important to be clear on what task the protective devices are intended for and what the noise situation is in those work environments. On ro-ro deck, for example, it must be possible to hear and communicate with other workers, which puts special demands on the protective equipment.

One of the many hearing protective devices on the market is EARfoam. It is a



Photo: Nordic Photo Contest for Seafarers, Per-Olov Sandman

moulded protective device that has been tested on Stena Line with excellent results. Three other good brands are Bilson, Peltor and Scandcom, but there are many more. Request to test the protective devices before making a decision and make a point of

testing several brands. Remember that hearing protection is a personal protective device and should be supplied by the shipping company, according to current legislation.

Göran Hansson

On a regular basis, the Maritime Safety Inspectorate publishes information on incidents as well as reports 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.

Tangled in kink and pulled overboard

Two severe accidents involving fishermen who were pulled overboard when tangled in their equipment have been reported recently. The first case was a solo fisherman who had recently taken over the boat. After he had been reported missing, the boat was retrieved but nobody was on board.

When the equipment was located the fisherman was found tangled in the line. In order to facilitate handling of the equipment the fisherman had removed a safety device intended to prevent getting tangled in the equipment.

The other accident involved a boat with a two-man crew. One of them was pulled overboard when handling the equipment. The other tried to help him up, but failed to do so. When the boat came into position, the man in distress drifted in under the hull, out of reach of his co-worker. Other vessels nearby were called in and the accident was also brought to the coastguard



and services attention. They sent a unit, which managed to get the man out of the water.

The following can be observed:

- Never remove safety devices. They are there for a reason.
- Always alert all available help. Time is often of the essence.

MAIB SD 1/2005 C 22, DK 1/2005

ARPA's precision overestimated

Early one morning last winter a passenger vessel collided with a tanker east of Falsterboev. Both vessels had sighted each other well in advance and the names were known through AIS. The passenger vessel had the tanker to its starboard side and was therefore required to veer. The officer on board the passenger vessel noted a CPA of 0.3 m according to ARPA, with which he was content. He left the radar and went over to the chart table. The watchkeeping seaman gave several warnings that the tanker was approaching without changing its bearing. He was told that it would not be a problem. By the time the officer realised the gravity of the situation it was already too late and he tried an evasive action that failed.

On board the tanker the crew waited until the last minute to take any measures. The officer was worried that slowing down might trip the engine alarm because the axle generator was connected. The tanker also had another vessel to its starboard side, some distance away but still uncomfortably close, according to the officer. A hail by VHF gave no answer. The tanker slowed down and veered a little. It was, however, too little too late, and the vessels collided. The officer on board the tanker was on his first post and his insufficient experience is thought to have contributed to the late and vague action. The fact that the axle generator was connected was also a contributing factor. As regards the passenger vessel, the investigation questions why the officer ignored the information from the seaman. A BRM course can reduce the risk of such actions. Most important is that the officer considered a CPA of 0.3 m sufficient. The investigation shows that an ARPA radar only has to have 0.7 m precision in a corresponding situation. It is a risky business to put too much faith in electronic instruments. It is the navigator who should decide where and how a vessel is to be sailed, not the instruments. Electronic equipment is an aid to be used with proper safety margins and complemented by human monitoring.

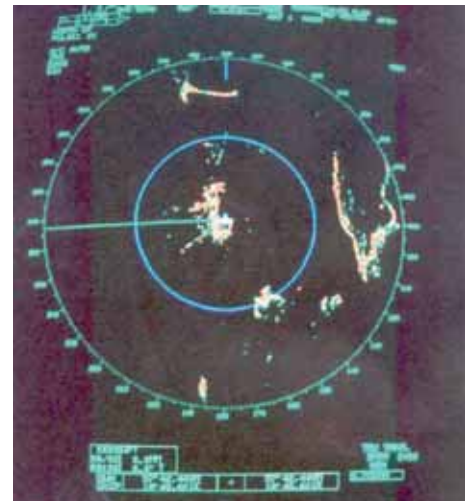
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Incorrect time can cause mistake in AIS information

An error in the software of certain AISs means that a problem with incorrect time may occur and cause interference in trans-



missions and slower updating speeds for the receiver. This in turn can lead to that some messages disappear. The problem should only appear with poor transmissions and the messages do not disappear all the time from one vessel, but from remote vessels they can disappear at times. The problem concerns AISs of the types SAAB R3 and R4. In connection with a leap second at the turn of the year the problem will automatically be corrected. Owners of the equipment can contact their retailer or service station for detailed information.

USCG Safety alert 5-05

Compressed air in lifeboat

In the previous issue of Maritime Safety Inspectorate information an accident was described involving a compressed air bottle that exploded in a lifeboat. The bottles can be found in, for example, covered lifeboats on tankers.

The idea is that, in the event of fire or a cloud of gas, there is breathable air in the lifeboat so that it is possible to get away from the scene. The bottles are sometimes stowed in such a way that it is difficult to inspect them visually. That is why it can be tempting to refill them without inspecting the bottle, particularly if they can be filled using a manifold. The Maritime Safety Inspectorate gives the following information:

The compressed air bottles should be inspected every five years. The maximum pressure should be marked on the bottle. If the bottle is stowed it may be appropriate to display the markings also in another spot, so that it is clearly visible when refilling without having to remove the bottle.

Note that the maximum pressure may vary. Some bottles have a lower limit than usual.

March 200533

SAN conference in Gothenburg

At this year's SAN conference in Gothenburg we took the opportunity to have a little chat to some of the participants and ask them to answer a few questions:

1. What work environment area on board is in most urgent need of improvement?
2. What did you think of the conference?

Anna Nordström, Swedish Government Seamen's Service

"Health and fitness measures are extremely important. An alert crew has better safety awareness, which leads to fewer industrial injuries and accidents. We need more effort to improve the diet and it is important to provide opportunities to exercise."

"The conference was great. Many of the lecturers were very inspiring and the selection of topics was good. I missed the panel debate, which was left out because some speakers ran over their time."

Björn Jonasson, Wallenius Marine AB

"Work with machines. Crews should follow the regulations for machine work more closely; I'm thinking specifically of rust removal. Holding a vibrating machine too long is dangerous and can cause damage long before your fingers start to whiten. In fact, there should always be an officer present to check that the regulations are being followed, but unfortunately there is not enough people on board for that."

"The conference was good, albeit a bit of a repeat of the previous SAN conference. Bad diets are a problem and it is important that industry players meet and get information about it."

Per-Olof Olofsson, Rederi AB Transatlantic

"Noise and vibration. This problem requires comprehensive measures in order to be put right, but with today's cost structure it may prove difficult. At least we can get better at using hearing protection. It takes a lot of discipline to be consistent in using the existing protective equipment."

"The conference was good. The lecturer who talked about food and health towards the end was very capable and presented his material in such way that it was easy to follow and take in."

Ingrid Dahl, Feelgood Hamn & Rederi

"Work techniques. All new employees should get a thorough introduction and learn the right technique from the start. I would like for us at corporate health services to get to meet them and teach them



Anna Nordström



Björn Jonasson



Per-Olof Olofsson



Ingrid Dahl

a bit about anatomy and physiology, but also give them information on current legislation in the industry and the responsibilities of the employer and the individual."

"Very nice. Useful is another way of putting it. It was interesting to hear about the various lines of trade that contribute to the diet on board."

Linda Sundgren

ISPS code under investigation

Discrimination, problems with going ashore and unpaid extra work are some of the consequences of the ISPS code (International Ship and Port Facility Security Code), according to a new study carried out by the International Transport Workers' Federation. Norsk Sjøoffisersforbund has carried out a similar investigation. According to the study, 85 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that the ISPS code has had a negative effect on life on board, 30 per cent claimed that at some point they had been refused clearance to go ashore and many felt that authorities view them as terrorists instead of partners in the fight against terrorism.

More occupational diseases but fewer accidents

The latest figures from the Swedish Maritime Administration show that the number of accidents in the workplace leading to sick leave fell from 218 to 200 between 2003 and 2004. The number of accidents that did not lead to sick leave also decreased. At the same time there were six more reported cases of occupational diseases in 2004 compared to the year before.

Project 'Sjöfartskvinnor' (Women in shipping)

50 per cent women in all maritime education programmes. That is the goal of the project 'Sjöfartskvinnor', which was launched at the Maritime Academy in Gothenburg last winter. Female students receive extra support at informal meetings with women who are established in the industry.



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