



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 394 of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017

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To: All Surveyors/Auditors

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Applicable to flag: All Flags

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**Fatigue at Sea should not be ignored**

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Reference: **ISM, MLC**

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**Fatigue at Sea should not be ignored**

Fatigue at sea is a growing problem. It is a growing level of fatigue, particularly among masters and watch keepers.

Fatigue at sea (both physical and mental) can affect judgment and therefore safety and can contribute to increased stress. This is a very serious issue, which must be addressed, and measures taken for it to be alleviated.

**Regulations, compliance and monitoring**

The shipping industry has strict regulations in place that all shipowners and ship managers must comply with regarding work and rest hours. These regulations are only part of the story. Checks need to be in place to ensure that these regulations are being adhered to strictly by all seafarers at all times without any operational or commercial pressures, perceived or otherwise from all shore-based stakeholders.

Managing company must have dedicated cell for monitoring and supporting seafarers in planning and ensuring work rest hours are met. Responsibilities may include:

- Working with charterers and owners to ensure that the ship complies with work/rest hour requirements
- Supporting shipboard staff to plan work (schedules)
- Taking steps to provide extra manpower when needed
- Trending data on ship type, trade and available manpower to forecast work load and assist

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senior officers onboard to plan work schedules for ports with simultaneous operations (SIMPOS) such as loading cargo, bunkering , storing followed by short sea passages requiring tank cleaning. Support and guidance on SIMOPS ensures proper planning and proper work rest hours to mitigate risk.

### **Importance of wellbeing, engagement and empowerment**

Regulations and compliance are only a small part of the equation. Given what we know today about the effects of physical tiredness on the body and mind, it is imperative that companies have programs in place to ensure that seafarers' wellbeing is top priority.

There are programs addressing mental and emotional health and covers every aspect of wellbeing at sea, from stress management to healthy eating and the importance of quality sleep and exercise; as well as a positive working culture and behavior.

Stress management and support due to any unacceptable bullying or harassment onboard may covered under these programs.

Awareness on work-life balance at sea is a key aspect of company pre-joining safety briefings and training sessions and hard copies of the guide (in both English and other speaking language on board) are available onboard for ready reference. The key to both these programs is empowering seafarers to take care of themselves and their health.

However, support should not stop with the seafarer themselves. It is critical that support is provided to the seafarers' families too. Knowing that their families are well taken care of and have a strong support system in their absence can relieve a good deal of stress that seafarers are facing.

### **Respect and commitment**

All seafarers should be treated equally and with respect and not defined by nationality.

Overtime should be carefully monitored by the same cell that monitors work/rest hours, and measures should be in place to ensure that any seafarer showing signs of fatigue is not allowed to continue to work as they are risking endangering themselves, their colleagues, our owners assets' and environment.

The safety and wellbeing of all seafarers should be a top priority industry-wide and embedded this into company Safety Management System

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REFERENCES:

- ISM, MLC

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