



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 566 of 06th July 2019

To: All Surveyors/Auditors

Applicable to flag: All Flags

Considerations: ISM Code and Subchapter M

Reference: ISM & Subchapter M

A Safety Management System – Beacon or Burden?

Whether a company implements a Safety Management System (SMS) due to ISM Code or Subchapter M requirements or to align its own internal processes, the value it will add to the organization will be found in the quality of the set-up of such a system.

Though standards like the ISM Code are strict on what should be documented, they normally provide limited guidance on aspects to increase the workability of the documented system, like structure, size, and complexity of the SMS. Four pillars that one can use for designing a system are:

- User;
- Structure;
- Dynamics;
- Communication.

User

When designing a SMS, the user should be put in the middle – as he or she is the person that will use the system. Start thinking about what information the user needs on paper and what can be left to his/her competency. Often multiple tasks need to be conducted at the same time, so the mental load should be considered.

*Customer Service Center
5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
E-Mail:*

joel@conarinagroup.com

*Technical Head Office
7111 Dekadine Ct.
Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (832) 451 0185,
1 (713) 204 6380*

E-Mail: vbozenovici@vcmaritime.com

Also, it is worth considering the format of the information that will be provided to the user. For certain tasks or for sharing best practices within the company, the use of sketches or pictures might be more effective than bringing the message by text.

Structure

To maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the SMS, it is recommended that the SMS be into different levels and that it is diversified for the different types of vessels in the fleet. Therefore, before commencing the detailed design of the SMS, collaborate with users to ensure that the structure is logical and results in a hierarchy which is clear to everyone involved regarding policies, procedures, work instructions, etc.

Dynamics

As the company changes, the SMS changes. Therefore, the SMS will basically become a dynamic system. Or, at least, it should. Over time, new items will be added to the system, due to changes in the organization or work environment for example. To continually develop and improve the SMS, various input can be used:

- Results from risk assessments;
- Result from audits, inspections, incidents, and near misses;
- Feedback and suggestions for improvement from the users, clients, and authorities;
- Project close-outs and lessons learned.

As essential as developing a SMS, it is also essential to maintain it, and – like pruning a tree – delete parts which are no longer of any use to keep it up-to-date and fit for the intended use, and user.

Communication

The SMS be a feedback loop in two directions. It is developed and implemented to ensure that all personnel in the organization are aware of the way work is to be done. However, it should also capture experience from the people working with it for others to learn. Therefore, it can also be used as the platform for capturing and sharing safety critical information within the company. It is essential to encourage people to come up with suggestions for improvement and to report near misses and incidents.

*Customer Service Center
5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
E-Mail:*

joel@conarinagroup.com

*Technical Head Office
7111 Dekadine Ct.
Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (832) 451 0185,
1 (713) 204 6380*

E-Mail: vbozenovici@vcmaritime.com

Contributing factors in the success of these reporting schemes are the openness regarding reporting, the timely feedback provided to the people on their report and the actual steps (e.g. forms, on-line, apps, etc.) people have to take in the reporting process. When this is balanced, the company can become a learning organization.

REFERENCES:

- ISM Code and Subchapter M

- ATTACHMENTS: No

Kindest Regards,
Val Bozenovici
Naval Architect – Conarina Technical Director

*Customer Service Center
5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
E-Mail:*

joel@conarinagroup.com

*Technical Head Office
7111 Dekadine Ct.
Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (832) 451 0185,
1 (713) 204 6380*

E-Mail: vbozenovici@vcmaritime.com