

SHIPPING AND REST

How we can do better



Rest time demands that all those involved, company and ship's management and individual seamen, recognize that sufficient rest is absolutely essential for modern shipping and for operating safely and soundly.



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Guidance for company and ship's management and individual seamen

Discuss it aboard

In the Shipping and Rest guidance, you can read how company management, ship's management and individual seamen can do something about hours of rest. All the parties need to think along new lines - company management about organisation; ship's management about watch planning, changing systems and routines; and this should all be done in dialogue with the crew.

All changes can be difficult but involving the crew boosts commitment. Greater insight and a feeling of being involved amongst the crew is the quick way to getting ownership for changes taken. The extent of changes must be broadly agreed with the involvement of the entire crew. This could be done for example by calling an extraordinary safety committee meeting with everybody invited. This procedure will create the best basis for getting your message accepted.

Talk about it aboard and discuss how everyone could benefit from hours of rest being properly planned.



We do not know how many accidents are due to lack of sleep. Accidents seldom have a single cause. But lack of sleep plays a part in accidents because it leads to poor concentration and slower reaction times. It increases the risk of mistakes and people react slower which can mean not averting an accident in time.



Sleep is just like hunger and thirst. The longer we go without drinking, the thirstier we become. It is the same with sleep. We are normally awake for 16-18 hours, then we get sleepy and can easily fall asleep. After sleeping for 6-8 hours, we are well rested and can again function well for 16-18 hours.



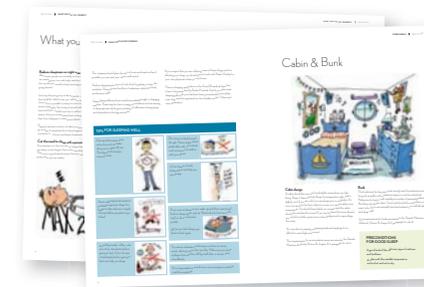
The watch system provides the framework for how much rest individual seamen can get. At sea, there are two special watch systems: a 2-shift watch where there are two watches to share the working hours of the day and a 3-shift watch where there are three watches to share the day. It is the company that makes the final decision about crew size based on the minimum manning laid down by the Maritime Authority - and thus also which watch system is used aboard.

By focusing on watch schedules, duties and how they are distributed, it is possible to try and create better opportunities for the crew to get sufficient sleep.



Staying in port is one of the situations that gives major challenges. There are many extra duties that require extra hands. Many ships have completely dropped port stay planning because they cannot get their plans to work. But taking a fresh look can provide good opportunities to plan things differently.

First, you should plan as much rest as possible before arrival so that the crew are as rested as possible before and have the energy for their duties.



After leave, people are normally in their normal daily rhythm. If you are starting your tour with night watches, it is a good idea to take the top off your need for sleep by being as rested as possible before going aboard. Let's say that you get up at about 06.00 - 07.00 hrs. This means that by 18.00 - 19.00 hours, you will have been awake for 12 - 13 hours. So it is possible to sleep for a few hours before starting work at midnight. Your body clock will still mean that you feel very tired at 03.00 - 04.00 hours but it will be less pronounced. Your accumulated sleep deficit will be those few hours less than if you had not slept at 18.00 - 19.00 time.



Research has shown a marked increase in digestion problems for people who work changing watches. After sleep problems, stomach problems are the most pronounced consequences of changing working hours. There may for example be a tendency to constipation or diarrhoea and the explanation may be that changing watches means irregular mealtimes. This may lead to eating more snacks with too much fat and carbohydrate.



It is the company that is responsible for the actual route plan and manning. And it is they who set the overall framework for planning hours of work and rest. Company management here need to consider whether work aboard involves extra duties which would require a larger crew on the ship.