

How to manage risk

Each month SAS delves into the safety initiatives being rolled out across ship operators' fleets to discover inspiring examples of best practice in the industry. This month we talk to Captain Venkat Kesav, the fleet health, safety, environment, and quality (HSEQ) risk manager at Campbell Shipping, about its initiative to make sure crew take the time to stop, think, and plan to reduce accidents on board

Tanya Blake, SAS editor



Q. Please tell us a bit about Campbell Shipping.

Campbell Shipping has been operating since 2009, formed out of the legacy of Scottish naval architect George Campbell, who opened a technical management company called Dockendale Shipping in the Bahamas in the late 1960s. In 2009, Dockendale Shipping was sold and Campbell Shipping assumed the technical management of ships and continues to do so today.

We currently own and manage a fleet of 12 dry bulk vessels and are primarily based in Nassau, Bahamas, with a branch/manning office at Mumbai, India. Our current fleet of vessels is wholly managed in-house and chartering/post-fixture, operations, technical, and manning are all-inclusive.

Our management philosophy is centred on people: those we employ and those we serve. We believe that meeting and exceeding the needs of people is a key component to our success.

Q. How do you ensure safety is embedded in Campbell Shipping's day-to-day work practices?

All new employees are familiarised with the SMS as part of the introductory training given to the candidates. The SMS training provides a good platform for them to get a feel of the 'Campbell culture' and our way of doing things on board. Each candidate must have first-hand knowledge of everything from safety and environmental protection policies to reporting incidents and near misses to hazard identification and risk management.

Q. It can be easy for people to get complacent about risks during routine tasks. Please tell us about your initiative to make sure crew take the time to carry out proper risk management.

Our STOPP-Take 5 initiative is designed to remind everyone to stop, think, observe, plan, and proceed, rather than merely rush into a job. The drive is also focused on highlighting the fact that "complacency will bite", and at times really hard.

We encourage all staff to adopt this informal safety tool by running a regular contest where they can submit their own example of how and when they used it. Winners receive a monetary prize and we share the examples across the fleet via our internal publication, *Gangway*. The magazine goes out to our entire fleet and is an excellent way for us to engage with crew.

A recent winner, CS Jaden, demonstrated his proactive and measured approach to cleaning the main engine turbocharger nozzle ring. Despite the fact that cleaning was about to be carried out, Jaden stopped the engine room blowers to carry out an initial risk assessment.

After removing the gas inlet casing to clean the nozzle

ring, the turbine shaft started rotating at a high speed due to the flow of air on the turbine blades, which could damage the turbocharger bearings. To prevent this damage, Jaden said it was necessary to start the lube oil pump to lubricate the bearings, but this couldn't happen due to the ongoing routine maintenance. Jaden conducted a STOPP-Take 5, immediately assessing the potential hazard and reviewing the initial risk assessment. The air flow to the turbine blades was stopped by covering the silencer on the blower side with a canvas sheet. This eliminated the potential hazard. The turbocharger was boxed back and is now running at optimum performance.

This is a clear example of how the STOPP-Take 5 initiative has helped to mitigate risks and has made crew more alert during tasks. We can see crew practising STOPP-Take 5 and the alert level in all has improved by leaps and bounds.

Q. Why is the STOPP-Take 5 initiative and risk assessment in general such a big focus?

Many may believe risk assessment to be a mundane subject that has nothing to do with the reality of working on board ship. Some may also believe it is all about documenting risk assessment in a form just to prove that the risk assessment is carried out. But in reality it is far from just creating a huge amount of paperwork. It is a genuinely important way to identify sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace.

Risk assessment for ships should be continual, flexible, and reviewed regularly to improve safety and prevent pollution. Since risk is never a constant or concrete entity, perceiving or anticipating the level of danger a situation might pose is all down to the experience, training, and even disposition of an individual. The way people respond to an issue, their general awareness, and the constant vigilance of all involved play a vital role in assessing risks in ship operations.

The shipping industry is becoming more and more serious about this. Following any incident, the first question asked is "was the risk assessment carried out or not?" However, the effectiveness of risk assessment in reducing risks depends completely upon the seriousness with which it is carried out. It really does work as it helps you focus on those risks that have the potential to cause harm and helps to prevent serious incidents.

The best safeguard against accidents is a genuine safety culture – awareness and constant vigilance on the part of all those involved, and the establishment of safety as a permanent and natural feature of organisational decision-making. ☑

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