



SHIP SAFETY DIVISION International Safety Management (ISM)

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To: All shipowners, shipoperators, masters and designated persons of German ships

Sub.: Reporting of Near Misses

This circular summarizes the various important aspects of reporting and analysis of near misses. The circular should be read in association with MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.7 and MSC/Circ.1015.

“People make errors, which lead to accidents. Accidents lead to deaths. The standard solution is to blame the people involved. If we find out who made the errors and punish them, we solve the problem, right? Wrong. The problem is seldom the fault of an individual; it is the fault of the system. Change the people without changing the system and the problems will continue.”
(Don Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*)

1. General

The reporting of near misses is under the aspect „Reports and analysis of hazardous occurrences“ not only a requirement of the ISM-Code but also economic for a company because the performance of ships and crews can be improved and often the costs can be reduced. The ultimate objective of near-miss reporting and investigating is to identify areas of concern and implement appropriate corrective actions to avoid future losses. Problems can be exposed if near misses are reported and analysed and the results are disseminated widely. To guarantee an adequate reporting of near misses the company should adopt its own “just-culture” approach including the guarantee of a non-punitive outcome and confidentiality and communicate this strategy to their crews (by training and information).

2. Definitions

Near miss: A sequence of events and/or conditions that could have resulted in loss. This loss was prevented only by a fortuitous break in the chain of events and/or conditions. The potential loss could be human injury, environmental damage, or negative business impact (e.g., repair or replacement costs, scheduling delays, contract violations, loss of reputation)

Just-culture = features an atmosphere of responsible behaviour and trust whereby people are encouraged to provide essential safety-related information without fear of retribution.

3. Eliminate barriers

The company can do the following to eliminate barriers concerning reporting of near misses:

- Define a “near miss”,
- Encouraging a “just-culture” in the company which covers how the persons who are reporting near misses or other persons concerned have to be treated and under which circumstances a non-punitive outcome and confidentiality is guaranteed,
- Assuring that all information which identify a person associated with a near miss is removed and remain confidential,
- Establish a no blame-oriented policy,
- Co-operative management (honest treatment of safety matters, interest concerning known deficiencies),
- Comments on the near miss reports,
- Suggestions and recommendations should be disseminated widely.

4. Process of investigating near misses

1. Determine all needed information (minimum as mentioned in MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.7) and specify a report format,
2. Gathering information about the reported near miss,
3. Analysis of received information,
4. Decide if an in-depth investigation is needed (an in-depth investigation is required of those near-misses which are likely to recur and/or which could have had severe consequences),
5. Feedback to reporting persons about further action taken,
6. Finding external problems and factors,
7. Analysing causal factors,
8. Developing and implementing recommendations,
9. Final report,
10. Distribute the results to a wider audience,
11. Monitoring of implemented recommendations,
12. Long term trend analysis of all near misses.

Sources:

Resolution MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.7 - Guidance on near miss reporting
MSC/Circ.1015 – reporting near misses

Copies of MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.7 and MSC/Circ.1015 are available on our website
„overview ISM-circulars“ <http://www.see-bg.de/schiffssicherheit/ismd#ism>

Ship Safety Division

Annex / Procedure: Reporting and investigating near misses

