

New Bullying & Harassment Guidelines Launched

SHIPOWNERS AND SEAFARERS' UNIONS TEAM UP TO LAUNCH NEW GUIDANCE ON THE ELIMINATION OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Maritime employers and seafarers' unions have joined forces to publish new international 'Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying'.

The new Guidelines, developed by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), can be downloaded from the ICS and ITF websites.

These Guidelines have been launched in advance of an important International Labour Organization (ILO) Special Tripartite Committee on the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), to be held in February in Geneva, at which ICS and ITF will co-ordinate the representation of the social partners alongside governments.

Under the ILO MLC, governments are already required to satisfy themselves that their laws and regulations respect the fundamental right of seafarers not to be discriminated against during their employment on board ships.

Recognising that any form of harassment and bullying can have serious consequences for seafarers, the new industry Guidance takes the additional step of setting out what shipping companies, seafarers and seafarers' organisations can do to help prevent bullying and harassment from becoming a serious concern.

As well as providing advice on company policies on reporting, complaints and grievance procedures, the Guidance addresses the responsibilities of seafarers and their employers to use these procedures appropriately and for being aware of any harassment or bullying that might occur within the maritime workplace. This includes any instances of cyber-bullying.

The important role of seafarers' organisations in these awareness raising activities is also underlined. ICS Secretary General, Peter Hinchliffe, remarked: "Shipowners fully accept the

need to develop policies and plans to eliminate harassment and bullying as a matter of good employment practice. Bullying has serious consequences for the physical and emotional health of seafarers and can also compromise teamwork with negative consequences for the safety of the ship and its crew. The fact that ICS and ITF have collaborated to produce this new Guidance is therefore a very positive development." 2

ITF General Secretary, Steve Cotton, said: "Bullying and harassment in the workplace are unacceptable wherever they happen – but they have a particular horror at sea, where those affected may be isolated and alone, hundreds of miles from home. Until now there has been a lack of practical common sense guidelines and we're delighted that we have been able to work side by side with the ICS to address this need."

The Guidelines are now being distributed throughout the global shipping industry via ICS national shipowners' associations and ITF union affiliates. The authors are also encouraging their use by maritime training providers and other parties with an interest in promoting the elimination of harassment and bullying within the global shipping industry.