



## **IMHA WORKSHOP**

With the support and  
sponsorship of ITF/Seafarers  
Trust



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# **HEALTH AND OCCUPATIONAL RISK PREVENTION IN HARBOURS**

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## 2.- Objectives and proposed points for discussion

Harbours are a meeting point of different type of vessels, different seafarers, cultures and organisations on shore. In our workshop we'll try to answer several questions:

1. What has been done already in health and prevention in Ports?
2. Do we have Health and Occupational Risks Prevention problems?
3. What are the main problems in different Ports?
4. What is the best action possible to share solutions?
5. Is there a common action, a way of collaboration?
6. Follow up and control
7. Recommendations

Main points:

1. We are trying to encourage different persons and doctors working in different countries to share main problems and solutions taken or to be taken in several harbours.
2. We'll try to respond to seafarers' health and risk prevention needs in ports.
3. IMHA should make an evaluation and propose some recommendations.
4. Research projects could be established and maybe IMHA can facilitate technical aspects and cooperation in maritime medicine.
5. A priority list, timetable and intermediate reports can be produced.
6. Legislation and cooperation of different international organisations can be taken into account
7. Publication of results in the IMHA Newsletter, website and other possible publications in other to create an international forum of experts for contact, comment and guidance.

## 4.- Summary and main conclusions for IMHA Newsletter

### IMHA WORKSHOP:

#### "HEALTH AND OCCUPATIONAL RISK PREVENTION IN HARBOURS"

In Barcelona (Spain), 25-27<sup>th</sup>. April 2002, a new IMHA workshop took place. This time the subject was "Health and occupational risk prevention in harbours". Main subjects were introduced in a first step: IMHA role as an international scientific association related to the maritime health, public and private organisations related to harbours, ships and problems related to medical care and social aspects among seafarers, occupational risk prevention, vaccinations, co-ordination and legal aspects, background and continuing education for doctors related to ports (university participation, distance programme education ...) and a new concept of an internet-based network for Port Health Authorities. Ten main attendants plus some collaborators contributed to discuss the subjects, conclusions are presented according different points proposed.

Occupational hazards do not distinguish between national borders or harbours. The presently identified chemical, biological, physical and psychical risks and exposures have to be taken into account on every ship and every harbour. Lack of risk prevention minimises the economic success of companies (amounts paid for workers compensation, loss of individual competence in case of fatality, chronic illnesses etc., loss of economic sources in case of technical failures). Risk prevention may be of benefit for both: companies as well as employed workers.

What has been done already in health and prevention in Ports? Main personal experiences from Barcelona, Tenerife, Gibraltar, Hamburg and so on were exposed and bibliographic references were taken into account. Let's see an example of situation in German Ports. In general the companies (shipping companies as well as companies that employ dockers etc.) are responsible for the occupational risk assessment and based upon that the subsequent risk prevention. On land companies are controlled by the local government of the German States (occupational health authorities) and the inspectors of the workers compensation. Situation on German ships: The local governments control exclusively circumstances related to hygiene on board, drinking water quality, medical equipment of ships and vaccination of seafarers, all other aspects of occupational risk assessment are inspected by the workers compensation for seafarers, which is additionally responsible for the "Port State Control". Presently there is no direct institutional co-ordination between the two authorities. A surveillance of occupational risks in German ports has presently not been done. In Spain, following the 89/391/CEE directive and the 31/1995 national occupational risk prevention Law, some initiatives have been taken, but a lack of co-ordination between the harbour authorities, inspectors, government institutions, social

services and foreign ships is also felt. In Gibraltar, as a small harbour, the co-ordination is totally different and based in a less complicated structure of competencies.

Do we have health and occupational risks prevention problems? Health and occupational risk prevention problems arise from seafarers and other workers with a poor standard of education, lack of knowledge in case of dangerous goods, lack of knowledge of hazards liberated from fuels, lubricants, psychical stress due to concentration of duties of crew members tiredness especially in coastal shipping. Safety, evaluation of risks, work procedures, personal preventive behaviours of all the workers, special measures for evacuation in case of accidents, have to be taken into account in all national and international programmes in ports.

What are the main problems in different Ports? Co-ordination of authorities. Second revision on ships after poor standards had been detected. And of course, a medical care and a social net has to be implemented. Different factors that may affect seafarers' health have been identified. Related to physical fatigue (number of crew members/ workload, qualification of seafarers, ship's type and traffic, meteorological and whether conditions, length of campaigns); psychological fatigue – stress (composition of crews - multinational crews- integration and communication problems, feeling of isolation because of reduction of crews, lack of free time, boredom, routine, lack of stimulation, long time at sea - separation of family, short stay in port. Unfavourable circumstances: night working times – consume of coffee, tobacco, easy and cheap access to alcohol and drogues, unbalanced meals, ships movement, vibrations and noises; dangerous cargoes, Danger in manoeuvring and in loading-unloading operations, lack of resources in case of emergencies, possible sex with prostitutes when in port, transmissible diseases etc. In relation to medical care of foreign seafarers, usual conditions are through the ship's agent or covered by the P&I clubs. Some special problematic situations are: arrested ships and abandoned crews, captains who do not take care of the health of seafarers, seafarers who need a surgery (not extreme urgent) and will be disembarked and sent home loosing their job etc.

What is the best action possible to share solutions? Bi - or multilateral information of Port Health authorities to guarantee a continuous surveillance of "moving problems" (ships) based upon same inspection standards. Convince shipping companies of the benefit of risk prevention. Maybe to share a common network of data, based on national and international legislation, to avoid epidemic diseases, inspect hygiene conditions and medical equipment of the ships etc. Some resources like one related to the inspection of ships in Germany could be profited.

Is there a common action, a way of collaboration? Define inspection standards for EU - countries and world wide. Define internal quality keeping procedures in port health authorities. Share the same data pool of ship identification data as well as data pools of identified technical failures on board of ships. Maybe IMHA could help international and national organisations to support a survey or a programme of co-operation to promote health and risk prevention in harbours.