



The ICSW Seafarers' Health Information Programme

PART

2

A Fitness Onboard Campaign in a Shipping Company

Health Promotion in a Shipping Company

There is an obvious link between health and ships. Health and well being of seafarers has an effect on work onboard. And work onboard ships has an effect on the health of seafarers.

The maritime industry pays attention to health, but focuses on selection, certification and reduction of accidents and injuries onboard.

An active health promotion policy, however, has a broader scope and adds health protection, lifestyle, ergonomics, hygiene and environmental aspects.

Healthy seafarers build a healthy company and ultimately improve profits. Benefits include :

- Less absenteeism
- Better work performance
- Less work related diseases and accidents
- Loss prevention
- Positive company image for clients and new employees
- More employee satisfaction
- Less employee turnover

An organisation's "culture" is like an individual lifestyle : a complex system of values and informal regulations, that determine how things are done or why they are not done in an organisation.

In this unique atmosphere it is a challenge to set up health promotion. Some companies have a philosophy and mission that leads to actions on health promotion. Other companies have an internal welfare policy. Also company

rules and regulations may lead to more health and fitness. A health programme in a company may balance extra stress from reforms and difficult transition periods. Characteristics and observations of the workforce can also lead to promotion campaigns.

A Fitness Onboard Campaign in a Shipping Company

The International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare, aware of the social benefit of sports, launched a project: FIT ONBOARD, as one of the topics in the Seafarers' Health Information Programme (SHIP).

SHIP stimulates seafarers to take responsibility for their health within their life- and work environment.

Although SHIP addresses individual seafarers on lifestyle related issues, SHIP is also an instrument for health promotion in the workplace.

Healthy fitness activities can be introduced in any company independent of its size or culture of work.

To be successful, a fitness programme in a shipping company has to be planned step-by-step. Various people in a company can participate in this programme : accident prevention and safety managers, HR managers, unions and social services. Even in companies with a less formal structure fitness onboard information can be used.

The SHIP campaign FIT ONBOARD offers your company a package, containing : guidelines to be used onboard, posters, a questionnaire and a Fitness Pack to stimulate, motivate and help seafarers to do sport and fitness onboard.

A Fitness Campaign in Seven Steps

Onboard ship, the modern way of life is a sedentary one and opportunities for sport and fitness are limited. Even modern ships cannot always meet the needs of today's seafarers: to do sport and fitness activities.

Physical inactivity causes higher risk on heart diseases, diabetes, overweight, cerebral haemorrhage, high blood pressure and low back pain.

Every adult has to be physically active during minimal thirty minutes per day, a fix walk or cycling is enough.

To stimulate Fitness onboard is one aspect of a company policy to preserve or improve the health of seafarers.

Fitness programmes onboard have direct benefits for seafarers:

- It makes seafarers physically and mentally stronger
- Seafarers are more balanced, without stress or physical hindrance
- Digestion improves
- Weight is kept under control
- Blood sugar stabilises, preventing diabetes
- Sleep improves
- Concentration improves as well as self confidence
- Bones and muscles get stronger, reducing the risk for injuries and disease
- Blood pressure stabilises and the amount of "good" cholesterol increases, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease
- Less accidents because of reduced stress, better concentration and better and more adequate reactions
- Less and shorter sick leaves
- More satisfaction and well being onboard
- Better self esteem and a positive image leading to better work performance

- More stamina and endurance for specific tasks
- Better coping with stress
- More pleasure, a better atmosphere, less conflicts and more teambuilding onboard

This model offers a company tools to start a campaign on fitness with success!

STEP 1 Why a campaign on fitness for seafarers?

Create support for the fitness promotion campaign.

First of all, you must try to raise awareness of the health problems or risks related to fitness in the company. Speak with key people and leaders. Discuss subjects such as the use of fitness onboard, health promotion, the framework to organise fitness onboard and the possibilities to fit the campaign in existing programmes.

STEP 2 How to handle this?

Set up a structure for the fitness promotion campaign.

In this step you need to set up a structure for the development and implementation of a fitness campaign onboard.

Get the interest of colleagues and existing workgroups and involve them in the organisation of FIT ONBOARD.

Create a workgroup or steering committee for the fitness campaign. Use existing channels of communication to announce the task and agenda of this committee to all employees. It is important that all kinds of employees are involved in this committee but especially seafarers have to be involved. An expert or health adviser is also useful in the committee.

STEP 3 What is important?

Investigate what the target group needs and wants

Collect information on the physical activity of seafarers onboard during and after their work. Analyse the relation between fitness and the general health situation within the company. Define the need of seafarers for more fitness and sport. Determine priorities, select particular target groups and inform all seafarers in the company about the results.

Only in this way can the campaign really help the seafarers. It is no good planning activities without active participation of the seafarers in the planning stage.

Instruments for identifying needs and problems are for example evaluated questionnaires and checklists (see examples). But onboard this can also be done less formally during meetings or workshops.

STEP 4 What needs to be done?

Make a plan for a fitness campaign onboard

Make a policy document and plan based on the results of the investigation. This document contains the goals, timing and planning of the various activities and identifies the contact persons for each of the steps.

Possible activities:

- A motivation campaign to stimulate seafarers to do more sport and fitness, eventually with a bonus – system linked to results.
- Offer seafarers a fitness room onboard with good equipment
- Set up a competition onboard and between ships in the company
- Stimulate walking onboard and give opportunity to cycle while in port
- Participate in sport activities in ports like "Sports of the Seven Seas" – see www.seafarerssport.org

- Hand out the Fitness Pack of SHIP with a Dyna Band, a pedometer and stress ball to create individual attention for sport and fitness.
- Determine the fitness of seafarers onboard by using the "Guidelines for Fitness Onboard Merchant Vessels"
- Organise a company sports day

In this step it is also important to decide on a bonus system. How to reward the seafarers who participate in the programme?

STEP 5 The start

Implement the campaign

Make the execution of the campaign possible and ask for reactions of the seafarers.

Make sure management is committed and participates. E.g. captain and officers have to set examples. Carefully start the programme with a good communication in meetings, newsletters, intranet and by other means.

Keep the campaigns going by giving results and information about the running campaign and activities. Instruments and programmes for intervention and implementation (i.e. exercise programmes, onboard competition between departments or individuals)

STEP 6 Have the goals been achieved ?

Evaluate

Check that activities took place as planned. Evaluate the success, the satisfaction of the participants and the effect of the campaign. Adjust where necessary.

Instruments for evaluating activities include process- and outcome-related instruments and indicators (see examples attached).

Compare e.g. absenteeism between groups of participants and groups of people who did not participate.

Make a report with recommendations for further activities and improvements to the campaign.

STEP 7 Keep the momentum going.

Adapt and Continue

A health policy is not built on one activity or campaign alone. Integration of the activities in a general health programme like the Seafarers' Health Information Programme (SHIP) of the ICSW is important in order to have effect on long term.

Fitness does not stand by itself but has links with healthy food and weight control to name only a few. But also add other topics to your health promotion policy such as fitness, malaria, safe travel and HIV/AIDS.

Consult www.seafarershealth.org regularly. New material is produced regularly for you to download. The material and other information on fit onboard is kept up to date there.

Review the company health policy regularly and analyse the needs of the employees. Adapt the policy on a yearly basis.

Determine the fitness of seafarers periodically.

ICSW - SHIP - Fit Onboard

To help your company set up a fitness campaign, the ICSW Seafarers' Health Information Programme (SHIP), has produced:

- Guidelines for Fitness Onboard Merchant Vessels
- Fitness Packs: with a pedometer + manual, a Dyna band plus manual and an anti-stress ball
- Three posters: "healthy body, healthy mind", "Your body is your capital, keep it fit" and "A fit seafarer = a safer ship"
- A questionnaire: "Fit Onboard"
- A display for the brochures
- A binder for the guidelines

If you want to start a fitness campaign in your company, get more information and material to improve the condition of seafarers onboard. Go to www.seafarershealth.org where you can download guidelines, posters, leaflets on fitness and also on other health topics for seafarers:

Food Safety, Safe Travel, Healthy Food, Malaria, Overweight and HIV/AIDS.

Individual copies can be downloaded free of charge.

Artwork for production of the material in a company or organisation can be downloaded free of charge after simple registration.

Quality material can be ordered by contacting :



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