

LIVING ON BOARD

12.1 General

12.1.1 The aim of the Code as a whole is to provide information and guidance aimed at improving the health and safety of those living and working on board ship. This chapter gives some more specific advice for the individual seafarer.

12.2 Health and hygiene

12.2.1 It is the seafarer's responsibility to look after his own health and fitness. High standards of personal cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained.

12.2.2 On board ship, simple infections can easily be spread from one person to others. Thus preventive measures, as well as easily effective treatment, are essential.

12.2.3 Good health depends on sensible diet, adequate sleep and avoidance of recreational drugs, and substance or drug misuse, excesses of alcohol and tobacco. Regular exercise is also beneficial in maintaining good health.

12.2.4 Treatment should be sought straight away for minor injuries; cuts and abrasions should be cleaned and first aid treatment given as necessary to protect against infection. Barrier creams may help to protect exposed skin against dermatitis and also make thorough cleansing easier.

12.2.5 The risk of contracting malaria in infected areas can be much reduced by taking precautions to avoid mosquito bites, for example by using mosquito wire-screening and nets, keeping openings closed, and using anti-

mosquito preparations or insecticides. Further guidance is included in Merchant Shipping Notice MGN399 (M+F).

12.2.6 Rats and other rodents may be carriers of infection and should never be handled, dead or alive, with bare hands.

Medication

12.2.7 Anyone taking medication, particularly any medication which may affect alertness, should notify a responsible officer, so that allowance may be made in allocating tasks.

12.2.8 Drinking alcohol whilst under treatment with medication should be avoided, since even common remedies such as aspirin, seasickness tablets, anti-malarial tablets and codeine may be dangerous in conjunction with alcohol.

12.2.9 The individual has a responsibility to ensure that inoculations and vaccinations required for international voyages are kept up to date and medications for the prevention of illness, such as suitable anti-malarial tablets, are taken when required.

12.2.10 Personnel on board ship are trained and equipped to provide initial medical care for the range of health problems that may arise. If a worker develops a serious health problem or suffers a serious injury, medical advice should be obtained by radio. Where necessary, arrangements may be made to transport the sick or injured worker ashore for medical treatment. Further advice on medical care is contained in the Ship Captain's Medical Guide.

12.3 Working in hot climates

12.3.1 High humidity and heat can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Perspiration is the body's best heat control mechanism, but sweat consists mainly of salt and water which must be replaced. When working in these conditions it is advisable to drink at least 4.5 litres (8 pints) of cool (but

not iced) water daily. It is best to take small quantities at frequent intervals. Salt can be taken in food, supplemented by salt-containing drinks to prevent heat cramps. Alcohol should be avoided.

12.3.2 If working in enclosed spaces, they should be well ventilated. The minimum of light clothing should be worn, in order to allow the largest possible surface for free evaporation of sweat.

12.3.3 In tropical areas especially, exposure to the sun, particularly during the hottest part of the day, should be avoided as far as possible. When it is necessary to work in very strong sunlight, appropriate clothing offering protection to both head and body should be worn. Light cotton clothing will reflect the heat and help to keep the body temperature down.

12.3.4 When working in exceptionally hot and/or humid conditions or when wearing respiratory equipment, breaks at intervals in the fresh air or in the shade may be necessary.

12.4 Working clothes

12.4.1 Clothing should be appropriate for the working conditions. Working clothes should be close-fitting with no loose flaps, pockets or ties, which could become caught up in moving parts of machinery or on obstructions or projections. Where there is a risk of burning or scalding, as in galleys, clothing should adequately cover the body and material should be of low flammability, such as cotton or a cotton/terylene mix.

12.4.2 Shirts or overalls provide better protection if they have long sleeves. Long sleeves should not be rolled up. Long hair should be tied back and covered. Industrial or safety footwear should be worn when appropriate.

12.5 Shipboard housekeeping

12.5.1 Good housekeeping is an essential element in promoting health and safety on board;

- equipment and other items should be safely and securely stored. This ensures not only that defects are discovered but articles can be found when required;
- fixtures and fittings should be properly maintained;
- all work and transit areas should be adequately lit;
- electric circuits should not be overloaded, particularly in cabins;
- garbage and waste materials should be cleared up and disposed of correctly and promptly;
- doors and drawers should be properly secured.
- instruction plates, notices and operating indicators should be kept clean and legible.

12.5.2 Many aerosols have volatile and inflammable contents. They should never be used or placed near naked flames or other heat source even when 'empty'. Empty canisters should be properly disposed of.

12.5.3 Some fumigating or insecticidal sprays contain ingredients which, though perhaps themselves harmless to human beings, may be decomposed when heated. Smoking may be dangerous in sprayed atmospheres while the spray persists.

12.6 Substances hazardous to health

12.6.1 Many substances found on ships are capable of damaging the health of those exposed to them. They include not only recognised hazard substances, such as dangerous goods cargoes and asbestos, but also some domestic substances. For example caustic soda and bleaching powders or liquids can burn or penetrate the skin. They may react dangerously with other substances and ought never to be mixed.

12.6.2 The employer's risk assessment will identify when personnel are working in the presence of substances hazardous to health, and evaluate the risks (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 27). Appropriate measures should be taken to remove, control or minimise the risk.

12.6.3 It is important to read carefully all labels on chemical containers before opening them, to find out about any hazards from the contents. A chemical from an unlabelled container should never be used unless it is clearly established what it is.

12.6.4 If asbestos-containing panels, cladding or insulation become loose or are damaged in the course of a voyage, pending proper repair, the exposed edges or surfaces should be protected by a suitable coating or covering to prevent asbestos fibres being released and dispersed in the air.

12.6.5 Prolonged exposure to mineral oils and detergents, may cause skin problems. All traces of oil should be thoroughly washed from the skin but hydrocarbon solvents should be avoided. Inadvertent contact with toxic chemicals or other harmful substances should be reported immediately and the appropriate remedial action taken. Working clothes should be laundered frequently. Oil-soaked rags should not be put in pockets.

12.6.6 Coughs and lung damage can be caused by breathing irritant dust. The risk is usually much greater for a person who smokes than for a non-smoker.

12.6.7 Employers are required to instruct, inform and train personnel so that they know and understand the risks arising from their work, the precautions to be taken and the results of any monitoring of exposure.

12.6.8 Personnel should always comply with any control measures in place, and wear any protective clothing and equipment supplied.

12.6.9 In cases where failure of the control measures could result in serious risks to health, or where their adequacy or efficiency is in doubt, health surveillance should be undertaken.

12.7 Common personal injuries

Hand injuries

12.7.1 Gloves are a sensible precaution when handling sharp or hot objects but may easily be trapped on drum ends and on machinery. Whilst loose-fitting gloves allow hands to slip out readily, they do not give a good grip on ladders. Wet or oily gloves may be slippery and great care should be taken when working in them.

Foot injuries

12.7.2 Unsuitable footwear, such as sandals plimsolls and flip-flops, gives little protection if there is a risk of burning or scalding, for example, and may lead to trips and falls. Chapter 4 gives advice on suitable footwear. Care should be taken to keep feet away from moving machinery, bights of ropes and hawsers.

Eye injuries

12.7.3 Great care should be taken to protect the eyes. Appropriate protective goggles should be worn for any work involving sparks, chips of wood, paint or metal and dangerous substances.

Head injuries

12.7.4 It is important to remember to duck, when stepping over coamings etc. to avoid hitting the head on the door frame.

Cuts

12.7.5 To avoid cuts all sharp implements and objects should be handled with care. They should not be left lying around where someone may accidentally cut themselves. In the galley, sharp knives and choppers should not be mixed with other items for washing up but cleaned individually and stored in a safe place. Broken glass should be swept up carefully, not picked by hand.

Smoking

12.7.6 Ashtrays should always be used where provided. Matches and cigarette ends should not be thrown overboard since there is a danger that they may be blown back on board. It is dangerous to smoke in bed. The use of safety ashtrays is to be preferred.

Burns and Scalds

12.7.7 Burns and scalds are commonly caused by hot pipelines and stoves, as well as by fires. Every hot machine and every container of scalding liquid should be regarded as a hazard, capable of causing injury and adequate precautions should be taken.

12.7.8 Faulty electrical equipment can cause severe burns as well as an electric shock. Equipment should be checked before use and if something appears wrong, it should be reported.

12.7.9 In hot climates, precautions should always be taken against sun burn and heat stroke.

Misuse of Tools

12.7.10 Injury can be caused by the misuse of tools. It is important always to use the correct tool for the job, and to make sure it is used in the right way. Tools should never be left lying around where they can fall on someone, or be tripped over. After a job is finished, they should be put away in a safe place.

Manual Handling

12.7.11 It is easy to strain muscles when manual handling. Pulled muscles may be avoided if proper lifting techniques are used. Chapter 19 gives guidance on handling loads.

Mooring

12.7.12 Mooring and unmooring operations provide the circumstances for

potentially serious accidents. Personnel should never stand in the bight of a rope or near a rope under tension, and should treat ropes on drums and bollards with the utmost care.

Electrical hazards

12.7.13 Unauthorised persons should not interfere with electrical fittings. No personal electrical appliance should be connected to the ship's electrical supply without approval from a responsible officer.

12.7.14 Clothing or other articles should be left to dry only in designated areas, not in machinery spaces or over or close to heaters or light bulbs. This may restrict the flow of air and so lead to overheating and fire.

12.7.15 Hand pressing irons should not be left standing on combustible materials. They should be switched off after use and stowed safely.