



# DEALING WITH BULLYING AND HARASSMENT ON BOARD A VESSEL

LIFE AT SEA IS MARKED BY CONSTANT CHANGE, WITH SEAFARERS SPENDING EXTENDED PERIODS ON BOARD, OFTEN BETWEEN FOUR TO ELEVEN MONTHS. EACH CREW CHANGE BRINGS TOGETHER INDIVIDUALS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONALITIES, IDEALLY FOSTERING MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING. NEVERTHELESS, THE CLUB OCCASIONALLY RECEIVES FEEDBACK AND ENQUIRIES ON HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICTS AMONG SEAFARERS.

## UNDERSTANDING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

**BULLYING AND HARASSMENT CAN LEAD TO A RANGE OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES, FROM LOW STAFF MORALE TO POOR WORK PERFORMANCE, ABSENTEEISM, RESIGNATIONS, DISTRACTIONS, AND EVEN HEALTH AND SAFETY ACCIDENTS. IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO TERMS:**

**BULLYING** typically involves a recurring pattern of conduct such as inflicting harm, intimidation, unjustified criticism, loss of confidence, verbal abuse, display of temper or possibly even humiliation. It is generally repetitive, intentional and exploits imbalances of power.


















**HARASSMENT** can be seen as a form of discrimination that manifests in unwanted, intimidating, or offensive behaviours aimed at individuals or groups. Unlike bullying, harassment does not always rely on power dynamics and may not be repetitive. It can take various forms, including sexual, racial or religious harassment.

Several factors contribute to bullying and harassment in the maritime industry, including power imbalances, stress, isolation and a lack of awareness. These issues need to be addressed to create a safer and more inclusive work environment.

**By incorporating these preventive strategies into the maritime industry, a more respectful and safe working environment can be fostered, promoting the well-being and productivity of seafarers while emphasising professionalism and accountability. It sends a strong message that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated and will be met with serious consequences.**

## PREVENTIVE TIPS FOR SEAFARERS

Seafarers can also play a pivotal role in preventing bullying and harassment by following these recommendations:

-  Comprehend and adhere to the company's policies and procedures for handling complaints
-  Actively participate in company organised training on such issues
-  Identify and understand behaviours that are considered unacceptable and should be reported
-  Be vigilant in recognising early signs of bullying and harassment among fellow crew members, such as changes in behaviour, isolation, low morale or poor work performance
-  Report incidents of bullying or harassment, whether experienced personally or witnessed and follow the appropriate reporting protocols
-  Contact the Designated Person Ashore (DPA) or the relevant authorities ashore if you are dissatisfied with how a complaint was handled
-  Develop conflict resolution skills to address disagreements constructively
-  Show respect for the cultural diversity among fellow crew members to prevent misunderstandings
-  Utilise available resources and counselling when necessary
-  Learn and implement stress management techniques
-  Avoid using offensive language, intimidating words or criticism when working with other crew members
-  Avoid leering, rude gestures, touching, grabbing or other unnecessary bodily contact
-  Avoid spreading malicious rumours or insulting other crew members
-  Engage in on board buddying to provide support to victims and encourage them to report incidents without fear of retaliation
-  Understand and uphold individual rights as stipulated in national and international laws, including the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)
-  Be aware of legal remedies available under the MLC or other relevant regulations
-  Seek assistance and support from seafarer organisations or other welfare bodies when needed.

**Members requiring any further guidance are advised to contact the [Britannia Loss Prevention Department](#).**