ADVICE FOR USING
SOCIAL MEDIA AT SEA

TODAY, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A VITAL TOOL FOR STAYING CONNECTED WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND THE WIDER WORLD. FOR SEAFARERS, WHO OFTEN SPEND LONG PERIODS AWAY FROM HOME, IT CAN BE A LIFELINE. HOWEVER, USING SOCIAL MEDIA ONBOARD A SHIP COMES WITH UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. BELOW ARE SOME ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SEAFARERS TO ENSURE THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA USE IS SAFE, EFFECTIVE AND RESPECTFUL.

UNDERSTAND YOUR EMPLOYER'S SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET POLICY

Given the potential impact of social media use onboard, it is crucial for seafarers to understand and adhere to their employer's social media and internet policy. These policies are typically in place to protect both the company and its employees from the risks associated with inappropriate or unauthorised content sharing.

Additionally, employers may have guidelines regarding the use of social media during working hours or while on duty. It's important for seafarers to be mindful of these rules to avoid disciplinary action and to ensure they are focusing on their responsibilities. Awareness and adherence to these policies not only protect the company but also help maintain a professional image for the seafarers themselves.

TIPS FOR ADHERENCE:

1. **Familiarise yourself with policies:** Carefully read and understand the company's social media and internet usage guidelines
2. **Avoid sensitive content:** Refrain from posting images or information related to operations, colleagues, or company details that could be sensitive or confidential
3. **Respect work hours:** Limit social media use to personal time to ensure that it does not interfere with professional duties.
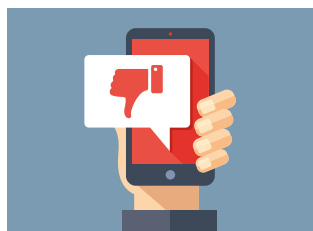
THE ISOLATION EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Onboard a ship, where the crew often works in close quarters, social media can inadvertently create a barrier between colleagues. Instead of engaging in face-to-face interactions, some seafarers may retreat into the digital world, focusing more on online connections than on building relationships with their fellow seafarers. This can lead to a fragmented crew dynamic, where individuals are physically present but socially disconnected. Such isolation can have negative implications for teamwork and the overall morale onboard.

TIPS TO COMBAT ISOLATION:

1. **Schedule offline time:** Set aside specific times for social media use and commit to engaging with colleagues during meals or downtime
2. **Participate in social activities:** Join in onboard activities to engage with other seafarers
3. **Share experiences:** Discuss online content or news with others to stimulate conversation and shared interests.

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONALISM ONLINE

While social media platforms are often used for personal expression, seafarers must remember that their online presence can reflect on their professional life. Posts, comments and photos shared online can be seen by colleagues, superiors, and even potential future employers. It's vital to maintain professionalism in these spaces to avoid damaging your reputation or career prospects.

TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALISM:

1. **Think before you post:** Consider the potential impact of your posts on your career and relationships. Avoid sharing controversial or negative comments about the company or industry
2. **Maintain privacy:** Adjust privacy settings to control who sees your posts and be mindful of the information shared online
3. **Be respectful and inclusive**: Consider the diverse backgrounds of colleagues when sharing content, avoiding posts that could be seen as offensive or insensitive.

ONLINE SECURITY

Seafarers also face unique challenges in maintaining online security. The maritime environment often involves using shared networks with limited security measures, making personal devices more vulnerable to cyber threats.

TIPS FOR ONLINE SECURITY:

1. **Use strong passwords:** Create unique passwords for each account and change them regularly
2. **Enable two-factor authentication:** This adds an extra layer of security, making it harder for unauthorised users to access your accounts
3. **Be wary of phishing scams:** Avoid clicking on suspicious links or downloading unknown attachments, as they may be phishing attempts or contain malware
4. **Keep software updated:** Regularly update your devices' software and apps to protect against the latest security threats.

Social media is a powerful tool for seafarers, offering a vital link to the outside world. By prioritising security, managing bandwidth, maintaining professionalism, staying safe, combating misinformation, and leveraging professional networks, you can enjoy the benefits of social media while minimising potential risks. Navigating the digital world wisely ensures that your social media experience is positive and enriching, enhancing your life onboard and beyond.