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New Eyes for the Blind

By Shannon Smith

I can still remember the first time I walked on board a ship to work offshore. I had been on a boat in the ocean exactly one time before in my life, and that was a tiny 30 foot open whaler near the shore. My boat experience before that was limited to tagging along with my dad to go fishing on a lake when I was 8 years old. (I still caught the biggest fish that day.)

So when I walked on board a work boat, everything was very NEW, very exciting and absolutely permeated with the stink of diesel fuel! I could smell it, taste it in the air and for the first three months, everything I ate tasted like diesel fuel.

By the fourth month, I could still smell it, but it didn't bother me so much and by the fifth month I couldn't smell it at all. On the sixth month, I went home to visit my family and they commented immediately on "that horrible smell" which had by then attached itself to all my clothes and luggage.

I didn't notice anymore because I had become 'nose blind' to it. When you live on the ship every day, you become familiar with the conditions and no longer notice what is obvious to outsiders. You become 'hazard blind'.

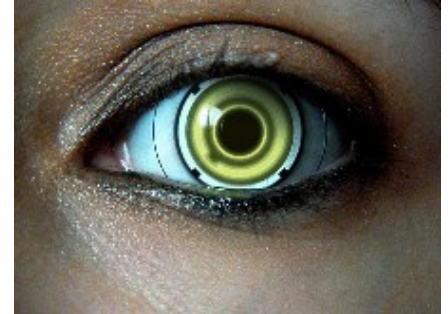
How many times have you walked past that lifting point without realizing it was not marked with a safe working load? Or painted over that crack in the deck without reporting it to be patched or repaired?

I know for myself that if I am focused on a task, I tend to be unaware of other things going on around me. The question is, how to take the virtual blinders off and see with new eyes.

Cross departmental audits are one way of doing this. You go to that department with the intention of looking with auditor's eyes and finding problems. **Hazard Hunts** are the same thing; walking the boat and looking for things that are out of place, in need of repair or just plain wrong.

The **Safety Observation Cards** are available to report any hazard, defect, maintenance issue, compliance issue or any other defect in our system or on our boats. Basically *any* problem or hazard should be reported on a safety card so it can be fixed.

A sure sign that a crew has gone 'hazard blind' is a lack of safety observation cards. No safety cards from a boat means an auditor or anyone else should be able to walk every inch of the vessel and find nothing wrong. Is that the case with your vessel?



How can we re-learn to see what we have become blind to?

"It was acknowledged that participation from some sectors might take longer to achieve than others - international experience indicates that it typically takes 10 years for the concept of near-miss reporting to become embedded in an industry."

John Rose, CHIRP Director

Got a Story?

If you had a near miss where you or a coworker almost got injured, what kept the injury from happening? (or not) Share your story so others can learn. Send them to HSE@tdi-bi.com.

TOP 3 Safety Card Hits

(Fleetwide last month)

Communications 2

Safety Attitude 1

Tools & Equipment 1

“Blind” Seafarer Concerns

CHIRP Maritime is “The Maritime Confidential Hazardous Incident Reporting Programme” based in the UK. This organization allows the industry to share lessons learned without breaking confidentiality or incriminating the reporting companies. According to CHIRP Director John Rose, “The aim is to seek out root causes, identify the lessons learned and to consider how best this information can be used to prevent reoccurrence elsewhere in the maritime industry.”

He advises: “...there are many hazardous occurrences we know go unreported, particularly when interfacing with third parties such as bunkering, onboard contractors, drydocking, etc. I often remind people that ‘I must do something’ is much more powerful than saying ‘something must be done’.”

As seen in the following reported example, seafarers become “blind” to the problems they see every day.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT – WORKING OUTBOARD: Upon departure from the port, whilst preparing the pilot ladder and working outside the ship’s rails, an AB was observed to be not wearing his life jacket and safety belt. The company risk assessment states the crewmembers involved in this job should wear a life vest and safety harness, but the **safety measures identified in the job hazard analysis had not been properly communicated onboard. The lack of adequate job instructions and supervision created a risk of death for the AB** as a result of falling overboard.

Lessons Learned: Prior to commencing the work, neither the supervisor nor the personnel involved had effectively reviewed the activity using a job hazard analysis. Ship personnel were reminded that in 2010 a fatal accident occurred on a fleet vessel during the handling of the ship’s gangway. They were asked to review the lessons learned in the report “Fatal accident to an AB who fell overboard during onboard work activities when securing the accommodation ladder”. It should be noted that if the AB had been wearing a working life-vest this could have increased the chances of saving his life. Strict implementation of safe working practices, as per the provisions of the Company’s SMS, is essential in order to prevent accidents.

Questions: Why did the supervisor not review the risk with his employees (JSA?) Why didn’t anyone exercise stop work authority? Was anyone doing the job aware that another AB had died doing similar work without his proper PPE? Was there a better way to do the job that would not require the AB to work over water? (Could the hazard have been removed using engineering controls?)

Safety Tips– Word Find

Things to look at and look for in a Hazard Hunt.

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|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| ALARMS | ANCHOR | BOLTS |
| BROKEN | CORROSION | CRANE |
| DAMAGE | LADDERS | LIFEBOAT |
| LIFT GEAR | PIPES | PPE |
| RAILS | RUST | SAFETY GEAR |
| SLINGS | STAIRS | SHACKLES |
| WINCH | WINDLASS | |

O H C N I W I N D L A S S H C
V O V E M S T A I R S X D K R
X B B O L T S C A G C G A A A
I F I R A I L S A B W C M Q N
L L T S M E C U B R R O A R E
W L I A V Y W D E O R R G U U
S L T F X O H U S K C R E S O
L S G E E R P I P E S O H T J
I H A T L B A E K N E S S F F
N A N Y K K O E P X S I R H X
G C C G T J M A G P S O E O G
S K H E U B X J T T E N D E Y
L L O A S M R A L A F S D F C
G E R R V U X U B R V I A J H
K S W W R Z D R N M J A L H K

[Words can go up, down, backwards or diagonally]