

To work we must rest



Safety: Eddie Janson

Captain Eddie Janson of MariTrain AB, instructor and consultant in maritime safety, points the spotlight at safety related matters in each issue.

Most of us have probably got stuck at an airport somewhere in the world, waiting for a flight that is delayed due to the airline crew not having had their hours of rest. We do not complain about this. On the contrary, we are quite happy that they will not fly with a crew that might fall asleep. But have you ever heard of a ship that is delayed due to rest hour regulations?

The reason that we have rest hour regulations is very simple. A seafarer who does not get enough rest will become tired. A tired seafarer is an unsafe seafarer. A large number of collisions and groundings are caused by fatigue. The Norwegian Maritime Directorate states that 13 per cent of all groundings with Norwegian flagged vessels 2002-2007 were caused by the person on watch falling asleep.

During my courses, the subject 'hours of rest' is almost always cause for long discussions. I usually ask the students, of whom all are active seafarers, "How many of you have cheated with the rest hours records?" Almost all give the same answer: "Of course we have".

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ILO C 180, either by itself or as included in the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, has been ratified by 25 countries. Examples of countries that have ratified it are Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Bahamas, Liberia, Panama, and the United Kingdom.

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Most of the time it is possible to comply with the rules by better work planning. If you for example know that you will have an arrival at 23.00, do not have the ABs to do any overtime work after dinner. If an engineer has an alarm at 04.00 in the morning, he shall not be back in the engine room at 08.00. If that is not possible there is not enough people on board, but if you submit monthly reports to the company that show that work is done within the rest hour limits, how should your company know that you need more people?

2: "The shipowner does not like rest hour records that do not comply with the regulations."

If this is the case, you should think

When I ask why they break the rules, there are many different answers, but the two most common ones I list here.

1: "It is not possible to do the job without breaking the rules."

twice about which company you are working for. On the other hand, I have heard this comment several times from people working in companies where I know that the shipowner wants to follow the rules. It is an old belief among many seafarers that they are making the shipowner a favour by bending the rules. By doing this, you can create problems for both yourself and your shipowner. If the vessel is involved in an accident, one of the first things that will be checked by investigators is the Record of rest.

There are two regulatory bodies that have rules for minimum hours of rest: IMO and ILO. IMO has regulated the rest hours in STCW95. ILO have regulated them in C180 and in ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006. The ILO Maritime Labour Convention is a convention where all previous conventions from ILO regarding maritime work are consolidated into one convention. The ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006 includes ILO C180.

The rules differ somewhat. Since the ILO conventions are the strictest, and because they are ratified by the biggest shipping nations in the world, this is the one to follow.

The ILO C180 states that minimum hours of rest shall not be less than ten hours in any 24-hour period and 77 hours in any seven-day period. Hours of rest may be divided into no more than two periods, one of which shall be at least six hours in length, and the interval between consecutive periods of rest shall not exceed 14 hours.

It may look like an easy task to calculate the hours, but I have seen many misunderstandings, made by seafarers as well as Port State and vetting inspectors. It is always the 'worst' case that counts. All periods shall be counted from the time of beginning of a work period. The same applies for the seven-day period. Most of you have a computer program that will do the calculations for you and give a warning if a seafarer does not get enough rest. But be careful with these programs; check if they are programmed to comply with STCW or ILO.

Make sure you are following the rest hour regulations. There are good reasons for their existence. *

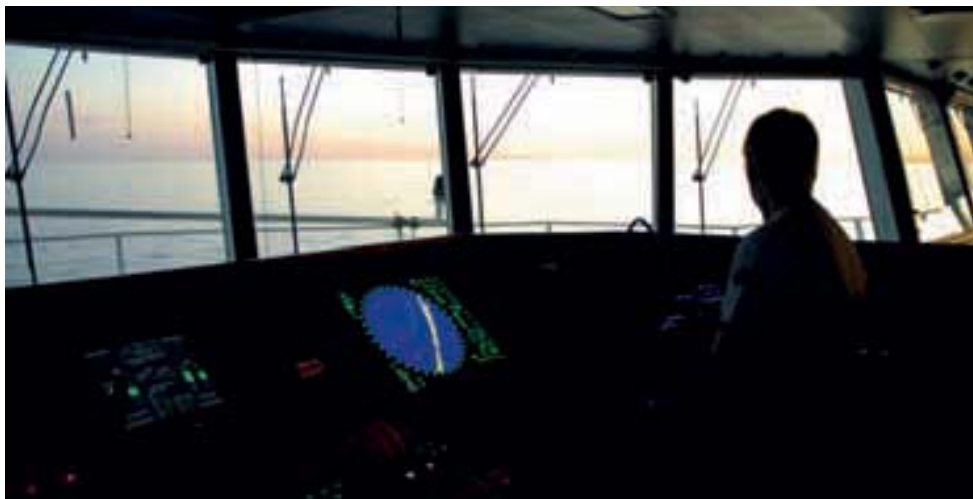


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