



AT WORK

A SELECTION OF DIFFERENT EXAMPLES FROM THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF BOSKALIS



SAFETY AT SEA: SAFETY OBSERVER INITIATIVE ABOARD THE ORANJE

To elevate safety aboard the Oranje, Captain Marco de Bruin has implemented a new initiative by introducing the role of Safety Observer. The goal is to embed a deep sense of safety consciousness within the crew's daily operations. Each month, a different crew member steps into the role and actively contributes to the vessel's safety culture. To encourage continuous learning and sharing knowledge, Marco explains the purpose and aims of his initiative, while crew members Joel Yuzon, Rocell Cadampog and Gilbert Rojas share their first-hand experiences.

Marco de Bruin, Captain TSHD Oranje:

“IT’S BECOME PART OF OUR DNA.”

Marco participated in the NINA Safety Leadership Expedition. “My personal leadership goal in joining the course was to concentrate on improving safety aboard the Oranje, encouraging involvement from the entire crew. Inspired by the discussions and being challenged on my role as safety leader, I came up with the idea for the Safety Observer role.”

After finishing one of the first sessions of the Expedition, Marco rejoined the crew on board and initiated a discussion. “I brought up the topic of safety once more, even though I know that discussions about safety and the multitude of rules can sometimes become tiring. I shared my participation in the Expedition with the crew, expressing my hope for their support in rolling out the initiative, because without my crew, I am nothing.”

UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PUBLIC SPEAKING

The role of Safety Observer was introduced aboard the Oranje in March 2022. Each month, a different crew member takes on this role. “Usually, it’s either me or the Chief Engineer who talks about safety. But I thought it would be good to designate a crew member as the Safety Observer each month to stimulate a shared safety awareness across all members on board.” >>>

Initially, everyone on board had to adjust to the new approach, as many people are not naturally comfortable with public speaking. But now everyone has fully embraced the initiative. "It's become part of our DNA. Everyone knows the importance of speaking up about safety concerns." At the end of every month, Marco asks the crew if anyone wants to volunteer for the role. Without immediate volunteers, a predetermined list is followed. The person at the top of this list is then assigned the role of Safety Observer for the next month and the cycle continues.

OPEN TO EVERY CREW MEMBER

The Safety Observer selects a weekly topic related to safety and serves as the facilitator during the Toolbox meetings on Fridays. "At the start, we used topics from the existing Fleet Toolbox, but we eventually began developing our own. This continuous process actively involves the crew. I motivate them to suggest topics related to our operations, turning their observations into safety discussions. For example, Joel Yuzon had a topic on contaminated soil, which is a crucial topic for the health of the crew." If the crew member serving as the Safety Observer is unsure about what topic to

choose, Marco offers them guidance. For instance, a young trainee Welder recently took on the role of Safety Observer. Marco advised him to concentrate on topics related to his duties. "Like welding, hot work and cutting, making it relevant to his specific job. This role is accessible to all, including trainees." A new crew member won't take on the Safety Observer role right away. Instead, they will step into the role after observing their colleagues for a few months. "This observation period allows the new member and the existing crew to become better acquainted." ■

Joel Yuzon, Able Seaman:

"WE ARE LIKE FAMILY, LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER."

"In my role as a Safety Observer, my primary responsibility is to ensure that no incidents occur. I generally appreciate the aspect of helping and taking care of my colleagues. We always watch each other's back and are like family, looking out for one another", says Joel enthusiastically. "You can also take the Safety Observer role home and apply it to ensure the safety of your family members. It is applicable to everyone in their daily activities, making it a valuable initiative."

ENHANCING SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Being a Safety Observer on board improved Joel's communication skills as he talked regularly with his colleagues about safety. "I convey my observations politely, ensuring my colleagues receive them positively. Maintaining friendships and avoiding negative impact is essential, and I achieved this by being polite and approaching them with kindness." With the introduction of the new role

of Safety Observer, Joel concludes that over time, all colleagues have become more involved and more attentive to safety. "In safety discussions, the crew is now more responsive because they understand that one of them might become the next Safety Observer. This awareness has led to a stronger commitment to take safety matters more serious."

COLLABORATIVE CREATION OF NEW IDEAS

"As Able Seaman, part of my routine involves taking soil samples. When dealing with potentially contaminated soil, I make sure to wear the necessary PPE and in addition I wear gear like eye protection, a face shield, and impermeable gloves to guard against potential hazards like dust and soil contact. It's crucial to protect our health as soil contact may lead to various skin diseases or even worse. We added this topic to the Toolbox ourselves. Step by step, we outlined what steps need to be followed to ensure a safe result, conducting risk assessments and documenting everything about this task. Just to be sure and to maintain our health, we have to do our part by taking



care of ourselves and following the safety programs that are already installed on board." Crew members acting as Safety Observer are not required to introduce new ideas during a Toolbox meeting; they are allowed to revisit old topics. "At the same time, through the role of Safety Observer new ideas are brought up", says Joel. "The role of Safety Observer is becoming increasingly helpful. It has the potential for further development and better ideas may emerge. For safety-related matters, continuing with this initiative is highly beneficial. It should be endless." ■

Rocell Cadampog, Second Officer & Safety Officer:

“THE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE SAFETY OBSERVER ROLE IS ACCEPTANCE.”

“The Safety Observer is responsible for identifying any unsafe acts. Upon immediate discovery, the Safety Observer reports the findings straight away to either the Safety Officer or the Dredge Master. After that, the team works together to swiftly address and resolve the issue, working toward the elimination or reduction of risks associated with a specific task.”

INITIATING CHANGE IN TASK APPROACH

Rocell states that serving as a Safety Observer for a month changes the way you approach specific tasks in a safe manner. “We were already focused on safety, but when this initiative started, it helped reinforce the importance of thinking ahead, more

than it was emphasized before. Now, you act as a role model for your colleagues, demonstrating a safe approach. You speak to your colleagues in a way that encourages them to follow your lead, adopting a safer approach. When they become the next Safety Observer, they follow the same practices or even improve upon them. It’s important to strike a balance between the positive and negative aspects when providing feedback.

“Now, you act as a role model for your colleagues, demonstrating a safe approach.”

Most importantly, we have a variety of cultures on board and each culture has a different approach. For instance, with Filipinos, we try to be as polite and positive as possible, while in Dutch culture, being straightforward is preferred.”

SUCCESS THROUGH ACCEPTANCE

“In essence, the key to the success of the Safety Observer role is acceptance”, Rocell concludes. “If you accept this initiative wholeheartedly and practice it on board, it will develop and grow in a very good, positive way. In the beginning, it might seem difficult, like fulfilling a different job as speaking in a group setting in a trainer role was a new experience that nobody was used to. But in time, being a Safety Observer becomes a chance for personal growth.” ■

Gilbert Rojas, Bosun:

“THE MORE EYES THERE ARE, THE MORE OBSERVATIONS CAN BE MADE.”



“The overall impact of this initiative is positive for us. It provides an opportunity for self-training in dealing with safety issues, helping us to learn to identify and assess risks. Following that, we focus on controlling and recommending measures to manage risks effectively. The more eyes there are, the more observations can be made”, Gilbert concludes. “What one person may not perceive as unsafe, someone else might.” When crew members observe an unsafe situation or equipment, they can promptly approach the Safety Observer.

“This makes it easy for everyone to speak up about potential safety concerns.”

SHIFTING FROM MONTHLY TO DAILY DISCUSSIONS

In addition to the weekly Toolbox meeting, the crew gathers for the Safety Committee meeting at the end of each month. “All the information about unsafe situations that occur on a daily basis is discussed during this meeting.” The team has found that most problems are already addressed before the Safety Committee meetings take place. “We no longer have to wait until the end of the month for discussions. It’s an ongoing, day-to-day process. This represents a significant improvement!” >>>

DARE TO SPEAK UP

After two years working with the role of Safety Observer, everyone dares to speak their mind and feels comfortable speaking up about safety. "This has been achieved thanks to this initiative. Safety awareness has been elevated to a higher standard since the introduction of the Safety Observer role on board the Oranje. Everybody is more alert in their working practices and at their working places as well. When our crew members become Safety Observers, it serves us and enhances our safety awareness." ■

**Our conclusion:****A NOTICEABLE SHIFT IN MINDSET**

After more than a year, Marco asked the crew if they wanted to continue the Safety Observer role. They unanimously agreed to keep the initiative going. "We remain actively involved, regularly brainstorming about new ideas to improve safety awareness on board. Everyone pays attention and listens carefully, knowing they might be the next Safety Observer. From my perspective, there has been a noticeable change. Improved awareness and emphasis on safety exists among all on board. This shift in mindset is considered a significant and positive outcome. Everybody is thinking more about safety. A big win! I recommend that other captains or even projects try this approach and stick with it for at least six months; they will notice how it helps and improves safety." ■

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AT WORK?**

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR THEM!

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