

# The alphabet of effective communication

## Alarm System Management

Alarms can be distracting, can cause confusion and be ignored by those who are not aware of their sources and implications. Careful design and management of alarm systems is required.



## Breakdowns in communication

Can be due to faulty, incomplete, or imprecise information or data, or through failing to interpret a message because of language, social or cultural differences.

## Cultural understanding

Recognise, interpret and correctly react to people, incidences or situations that are open to misunderstanding due to cultural differences.



## Display

A device or feature designed to provide status, position, or condition information to the operator through visual or auditory feedback.

## Effective communication

The successful transmission of information through a common system of symbols, signs, behaviour, speech, writing, or signals, by physical, mechanical or electronic means.



## Feedback

Exchanges of ideas, information and knowledge between crew and management ashore.

## Gossip, grapevine

An unofficial means of communication, which is normally founded on speculation and rumour; indicates a lack of effective communication.

## Handbooks and operating instructions

Ensure that documents that explain how to use, maintain and operate the ship and its equipment are written in the native language of the reader, are not technically complicated, and are easy to understand.

## Illustrations

Use imagery, photos, drawings and cartoons to inform and illustrate, in order to reach out to non-native English speakers - 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.



## Journals, Newsletters and Bulletins

Professional journals, company newsletters and noticeboard bulletins inform the crew of important issues that have an effect on their professional life, health, safety and welfare.

## Keeping in touch

Telephone communications, and email and internet facilities enable crew to keep in touch with their families.



## Language barriers

Some seafarers may be unwilling to admit their difficulty in understanding and communicating because the commonly used language onboard is not their native language.

## Management seminars

A means of bringing together seafarers from different ships and shore management, to exchange ideas, information and knowledge.

## Noticeboards

For the display of important information to the crew, such as watch and station bills, safety notices, company bulletins, social events etc..

## Orders, instructions & procedures

The 'what to do' and 'how to do it' of safe ship operations. All should be clearly defined, easy to understand and in a working language or languages understood by the ship's personnel.

## Paperwork

An abundance of correspondence (both paper and electronic), statistical reports,



## Rule of the Road

The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. A form of silent communication requiring vessels to take positive action to avoid the risk of collision, by standing on, altering course or adjusting speed, backed up by sound and light signals. Otherwise known as the Collision Regulations or Colregs.

## SMCP

Standard Marine Communication Phrases. A comprehensive standardized safety language, covering all major safety-related verbal communication, including phrases to cover the more important safety-related fields of verbal shore-to-ship, ship-to-shore, ship-to-ship and on-board communications.

## Telephony

Active management policies should be put in place to ensure telephones (especially mobile telephones) are not used to call the master or crew at inappropriate times, eg when navigating in busy or confined waters or when resting and in a substantially different time zone from that of the caller.



## User feedback

Seeking the input of those who live and work aboard ship in order to improve the design of the ship and its systems, in terms of its habitability, maintainability, workability, controllability, manoeuvrability and survivability.



## Visual signals

The use of flags, signs, symbols, hand signals and gestures to inform, direct and communicate especially to those who have difficulty in understanding and communicating because the commonly used language onboard is not their native language.



## Working language

English shall be used on the bridge as the working language for bridge-to-bridge and bridge-to-shore safety communications as well as for communications on board between the pilot and bridge watchkeeping personnel unless those directly involved in the communications speak a common language other than English.