Interventions — study guide

An intervention is stopping a job — yours or someone else's — before it hurts someone. It is one of the strongest safety tools a crew has, and one of the hardest to use. This guide covers why, how and the right order of steps.[1]

Why people hesitate

There are many reasons why crew members may be reluctant to intervene, including differences in departments, rank, age or nationality. The skill is to intervene anyway, respectfully.

Forms of intervention

An intervention can take the form of stopping a colleague during a task, seeking assistance from a senior officer, or holding a discussion prior to starting a task.

The order of intervention steps

The correct order is: **1)** stop the job if there is a risk to safety; **2)** ensure that the team or individual is in a safe position to carry out a discussion; **3)** make sure the conversation is positive throughout; **4)** highlight and discuss what could go wrong; **5)** agree the actions or behaviours that were unsafe; **6)** record observations using a "no name, no blame" approach.

Receiving feedback

When receiving feedback, crew members should be receptive, listen carefully to what is being said, and ask questions to clarify any queries.

Creating the culture

Senior officers demonstrate their commitment to a respectful workplace by following up on suggestions for improvement, promoting a culture of trust, and asking crew members for their opinions.

Key facts to remember

- Hesitation comes from differences in department, rank, age or nationality.
- Forms: stop a colleague mid-task; seek a senior officer's help; discuss before starting.
- Steps: stop → ensure safe position to talk → keep it positive → discuss what could go wrong → agree the unsafe actions → record "no name, no blame".
- On the receiving end: be receptive, listen, ask clarifying questions.
- Senior officers build trust: follow up on suggestions, promote trust, ask crew for opinions.

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Sources

1. ISM Code (SOLAS Chapter IX) and the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) — the authority to stop unsafe work and the "stop the job" principle.