Ship Safety Officer — study guide

The Ship Safety Officer (SSO) is the crew's day-to-day safety conscience on board. This guide covers the SSO's responsibilities, crew familiarisation and the rules behind the role.[1]

Responsibilities of the Ship Safety Officer

The SSO's responsibilities include inspecting and maintaining safety equipment; acting as the safety advisor aboard ship and ensuring that all health and safety requirements are met; assisting the ship's safety committee in enhancing the safety of the ship; and showing strong knowledge of the shipping company's safety policies and the ship's operational procedures.

Induction of new crew members

When new crew members join a ship, they should be trained on the equipment and operations aboard the ship, the location of lifesaving equipment, the location of shipboard emergency alarms, and the machinery and systems.

Appointment

It is the **Master** who appoints the Ship Safety Officer: the Master is responsible for the safety of the crew and the ship but cannot take the SSO responsibility on personally because of their other duties.

Regulatory basis and hazards

The regulations that provide details on crew safety are the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, and the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention. Areas on board that may present extra hazard include around deck hatches and tank openings, the engine and pump room, and enclosed spaces.

Key facts to remember

- SSO: inspects/maintains safety equipment; is the safety advisor ensuring H&S requirements are met; assists the safety committee; knows company safety policies and ship procedures.
- New crew training: equipment and operations, lifesaving equipment location, emergency alarm locations, machinery and systems.
- The Master appoints the SSO.
- Regulatory basis: STCW, ISM Code, SOLAS.
- Extra-hazard areas: deck hatches and tank openings, engine/pump room, enclosed spaces.

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Sources

1. ISM Code (SOLAS Chapter IX), SOLAS and STCW — crew safety, safety management and the ship safety officer role.