

## Dignity and Respect at Work

Inappropriate behaviour some of which may be tantamount to bullying and harassment is brought to the attention of Union Workplace Reps and Union Officers by offshore workers on a regular basis.

Most bullying and harassment cases stem from the continuous inappropriate behaviour mainly from those in charge of offshore employees who are stepping outside of their own employers policies that outline how all employees should be treated with dignity and respect.

All employees should expect to work in a stress free environment where any issues that arise at work should be dealt with in a helpful, supportive way and not in a shouting and bawling way where the bullying person is clearly breaching the employer's code of respectful conduct.

The main issue for any offshore worker or group of workers is when to challenge this disrespectful and inappropriate behaviour. It's always best to "nip it in the bud" and complain the first time it happens. However it's our experience as Union Representatives that the worst cases usually come to light after a long period of suffering the bullying/harassment behaviour, by keeping your head down because of the fear of repercussions from the person in charge, plus the fear of not being believed by senior management or HR. This is because in most times it's all verbal on a one to one basis with no witnesses present.

It's always best to challenge bullying behaviour from the outset

as bullies generally target employees who they have worked out won't complain thus starting a process of isolating the employee to be picked on until the stress of it all gets to the employee.

It then has the potential to cause long term ill health, or there is an immediate reaction because enough is enough and the employee reacts with anger at some point. This then becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation into this reactive behaviour and the bully walks away seeing their victim getting dealt with for their behaviour towards the bully rather than a process of examining and investigating why the reactive behaviour of the victim occurred in the first place.



It's important that any offshore worker who feels bullied and/or harassed at work seeks advice and should be supported by their Union when they make their allegation, because in our experience we have never met an employee who has made false allegations of being bullied or harassed.

In fact we have found that initially they hold back a lot of information because they have lost confidence and self-esteem and they feel that no one is going to believe them.

Should you wish to raise a complaint of any inappropriate

behaviour but are reluctant to do so because of fear of repercussion then you can always in the first instance talk confidentially to your Union before making your complaint.

Your Union will give you appropriate advice and support in the first instance and then follow through with Union representation at any future grievance meetings when you decide to pursue your complaint against the person or persons bullying and/or harassing you.

All employers should take any allegation seriously and carry out a thorough investigation to establish whether or not the allegations are true and not set out to use the investigation to cover up any intimidating or the aggressive behaviour that the employee has been subject to.

Finally always remember that some forms of harassment at work can be in breach of the Equalities Act for example racial, sexual, age or disability harassment and/or discrimination and so always seek advice from your Union very quickly. Complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment at work can be pursued to the Employment Tribunal but you must submit any claim three months less one day from when the act of discrimination/harassment took place in order to protect your claim from being time barred.

The message must be loud and clear to all employers, that they should create a stress free, supportive working environment by ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity and respect at work.

# Still Huge Challenges Ahead...

The downturn in the offshore oil and gas industry has hit hundreds of seafarers very hard – with job losses or the threat of redundancy, pay cuts and reduced conditions being imposed on many.

At times like these, the network of maritime welfare services provided in the UK can prove crucial for crews and their families. There are more than 80 charities working in the maritime sector – 36 of which primarily serve the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets and new research shows that seafarers require greater support and have more complex welfare needs than the general population.

Against this background, Nautilus is backing the findings of a major new report which recommends radical changes in the way welfare services are organised and delivered to serving and retired seafarers and their families.

The 224-page Navigating Change report, which was published to coincide with a two-day Maritime Charities Group conference last month, calls for much greater cooperation and collaboration between welfare organisations if they are to meet the growing challenges of supporting seafarers in the years ahead.

The report is based on extensive research into the needs and aspirations of seafarers and their families, and the changing nature of demand for welfare services to support them. With an ageing population of serving and retired seafarers, the study concludes that increased support will be required over the next 10 to 20 years in such areas as financial needs, social isolation and loneliness, dementia, limitations on daily life, and long-standing health conditions.

The research highlighted the way in which changes in the shipping industry are fuelling new welfare needs among serving seafarers and their families and found that two-thirds of maritime welfare charities had reported increased demand

in the last decade as a result of the economic downturn and austerity policies.

Nautilus has welcomed the report and is working to ensure that its recommendations are acted upon. In particular, measures to address such problems as reduced shore leave opportunities and poor onboard connectivity should be high on the agenda.

The Nautilus Welfare Fund has done – and is continuing to do – a huge amount to expand its Mariners' Park residential and care facilities for former seafarers and is also increasing the scope of its caseworker service to ensure that seafarers and their families get the services and support to which they are entitled.

However, the report rightly identifies the huge scale of the challenges ahead and the need for the maritime charity sector to cooperate and collaborate more closely, and to develop even more innovative and effective programmes to cope with the growing demands.

Steve Doran  
Nautilus

## ROADSHOW ALERT

Dates for the diaries everyone, OCG are coming to you once again and this time our hit list is:

### GLASGOW!

Premier Inn, 187 George St – Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Nov – 6pm

### EDINBURGH!

Jurys Inn, 43 Jeffrey St – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> Nov – 6pm

***All offshore workers welcome!!***

## Letters to the Editor

One reader has sent this “Diary of despair” from the wall of his cabin on an offshore installation and it really is desperate reading! We’ve always known the move to a 3:3 rotation was the most hated change ever to be applied on production platforms and this diary which plots the days of a 3-week trip really bring it home. The depressing diary entries start with “Return to purgatory”, so the platform must be pretty bad with the definition of “purgatory” being; “a place or state of suffering”. But then our writer talks about cabin sharing and disturbed rest periods, a lack of welfare provisions and never ending cuts to everything from wifi to newspapers, the quality of food and a feeling of “them and us”, so things are pretty bad. By the middle of the 21-day trip our writer

is referring to – Distress, Depression, Anxiety and Fatigue. As we get beyond the previous norm’ of 14 days, we see our

# Diary of Despair



writer reflect – “no highs no hope” and by the 19th day they reach the, “Tipping point”. Ok, we

accept this has probably been put together as a laugh and bit of light relief, but there is a serious side to this. Based on the reactions the OCG Trade Unions continue to get from members affected by the 3:3 change we don’t think the diary entries in our “Diary of Despair” are that far off the mark of reality for many, many workers across the sector today. We certainly feel it is time for some honest reporting about sickness absence levels and the reasons for the absence as we suspect there has been an increase in absence due to stress, depression or other mental health associated issues and it is time the industry looked at this. After all, if there is no evidence of any increase in this area, what does the industry need to worry about?

10	11	12 (1) RETURN TO PURGATORY	13 (2) REALISATION	14 (3) DREAD	15 (4) DESPAIR	16 (5) DESPONDANCE
17 (6) MY GOD	18 (7) WILL IT EVER IMPROVE	19 (8) 3+3 NOT FOR ME	20 (9) NOT EVEN HALFWAY	21 (10) DISTRESS	22 (11) DEPRESSION	23 (12) ANXIETY FATIGUE
24 (13) FATIGUE	25 (14) SHOULD BE TALP END	26 (15) NO WANTS OR HOPE	27 (16) PRECIPICE REACHED	28 (17) TILTING	29 (18) TIPPING POINT	30 (19) MAYBE JUST MAYBE.

Register for  
the OCG Webinar  
1<sup>st</sup> November, 7pm  
**HERE**

Register for  
the OCG Webinar  
4<sup>th</sup> December, 7pm  
**HERE**

Our colleagues at the "North Sea Offshore Rank and File" Facebook page have been pushing the issue of the H225 Super Puma and getting quite a lot of feedback. We thought we would share one extremely good contribution from one of the group who said... We probably couldn't have put it better, nice one!

*So who is the problem with? Which holds the least faith, the airframe itself or Airbus?  
 In 2009, the rotor detached, 16 people died. Spalling in sun gear lead to stress fracture, causing catastrophic gear failure. The fix? Increased inspections, improved mag chip system, improved HUMS and more strict control over materials/components.  
 2016, rotor detached, 11 people died. Spalling in sun gear, stress fracture blah blah blah. What are the findings this time? "We'll improve the mag chip system, shorten time between inspection periods, and improve the HUMS system, more strict control over component tracking.  
 Personally, I believe there's a design flaw leading to these failures. But for me, I have even less faith in Airbus themselves. It seems that the cause of the problem has not been addressed, and if they return to service in the North Sea, essentially they're on trial, to see if they've cured the faults this time. I'm not prepared to be that Guinea pig; I'm not convinced the measures they've taken have cured the fault. It didn't last time!*

*Anonymous.*

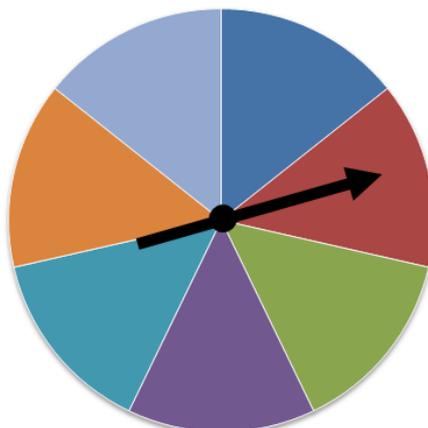
**As the old proverb says, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me!"**

**Ladies and gentlemen,  
 It's time for this weeks,**

# **Wheel of.... Mince!**

**Come on down and give it a spin to reveal your prize!**

- Plain Mince
- Fancy Mince
- Italian Mince
- Curried Mince
- Mince in a Pie
- Shepherds Mince
- Mince Balls



Things are tight offshore right now and there's probably no one under more pressure than our offshore chefs as they try to produce and maintain the quality of service with a budget that is being squeezed constantly. Every effort is being made to turn out the best standard of meals but as the old saying goes – you can't please everyone!

One of our regular readers has sent us a variation on a "pie chart", he has sent us a 'mince chart'. He claims this chart is hung on the wall at the entrance to the platform mess room. Excuse the pun colleague, but we think there's a few 'porkies' here. We welcome your input about the impact of cost cutting, but we can't accept the suggestion that an offshore chef has produced the "Wheel of mince" because that's all there is to eat, sorry! It is though a good bit of banter and we hope it serves to support our hard working and committed catering teams who all too often get the grief when the pressure of cost reduction means they can't get out a meal that suits all tastes.