



## SHIP OPERATIONS COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

# SOCP Strategies for Combating Distracted Operations in the Maritime Industry

Being distracted from, or not giving your full attention to vessel operations could result in serious consequences. Anything that takes attention away from your duties can lead you to make a poor choice when operating a vessel or miss the opportunity to take corrective action soon enough for it to be effective. Examples of inattentive operations can include: eating, drinking, smoking, use of personal electronics devices including non task related cell phone use, and distractions that take you away from your primary duties/tasks for the safe operation of the vessel.

### Dealing with Distractions

No matter what the distraction, operators exhibit the same basic type of behavior when distracted. Operators that are distracted react more slowly to conditions or events and frequently fail to recognize potential hazards. This can decrease “margins of safety” leading to increased risk of incidents. Below are some ways to reduce operational distractions:

- Preprogram operational related electronics to minimize distractions during operations.
- Utilize warning and alarm functions to alert watch-standers and lookouts of developing traffic in time to make effective decisions.
- Ensure noise levels are low enough to enable clear verbal communications.
- Plan ahead and complete tasks that could cause potential distractions during vessel operations.
- Know in advance how & who to summon if you require additional help in high risk situations or due to any unforeseen circumstances.
- Manage fatigue by getting proper rest and nutrition each day.
- Provide breaks for lookouts at sufficient intervals to facilitate peak concentration on operational tasks.
- Focus on operational tasks and avoid being distracted by non-operationally related issues.
- If you have emotional issues that could distract you from your duties, take steps to address them, or, if necessary, take appropriate time to stabilize your emotional situation.

### Dealing With Personal Electronic Devices

Personal electronic devices such as smart phones, computers and iPADS are commonly found on board vessels and can be a resource in an emergency. However, they can also be distracting if used for tasks not essential for vessel operations. It is essential that, if you use personal electronic devices on the job, you follow these tips to help reduce risk:

- Recognize that vessel operation requires your full attention.
- Before you begin operational duties, familiarize yourself with the features of the devices you'll be using and in what circumstances they are allowed to be used.



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- Use personal electronics devices only if and when it is absolutely necessary and only in accordance with policies established for your company/vessel.
- Ask for assistance from supporting personnel to place calls, and, if possible, ask them to do the speaking/listening.
- Use message-taking functions on the device and return calls when it is operationally safe to do so.
- Keep conversations short, especially under busy or hazardous conditions.
- Inform the person you are calling that you are conducting vessel operations and can only discuss immediate, critical issues.