



Waypoint

Maritime CiC

A unique not-for-profit: Reinvesting all income to further seafarer mental health and wellbeing.

Supporting Crew During Times of Crisis

The escalating crisis in the Middle East has created a situation of heightened risk and uncertainty for vessels in the region. The impact of political unrest can be profound for those directly and indirectly affected. There may be a range of emotions amongst crew, shoreside staff and families of crew members on board.

Communication is a top priority – we have learned from previous periods of heightened risk and uncertainty that crew often feel forgotten and abandoned, even when shoreside staff are working hard to protect and support crew. We know that the number one thing influencing mental health and wellbeing on board is how much crew believe the company cares, and never more so than during times such as these.

Acknowledge the situation and the impact on crew and their families, including their stress and current distress. Assure them that their safety and wellbeing are your priority and explain steps being taken.

Protect Physical Safety as the Primary Priority

Make it explicit that crew safety overrides commercial pressure. Share any specific advice about establishing safety on board. Explain the steps being taken to secure the safety of crew.

Provide Regular and Predictable Updates. Create a consistent rhythm of communication to reduce uncertainty – this may be more at the beginning of the crisis, and then daily as the situation becomes more predictable. Combine Communication Channels – Use video calls if connectivity allows, create a page on your website and use written notices and shipboard briefings.

Limit information overload, encourage people to balance media exposure which can fuel fear and anxiety.

Be as Open and Transparent as possible – share information about current risk and how it is being monitored. acknowledge the uncertainty, what is not yet known and what is currently being done to secure crew safety.

Providing factual information helps to contain uncertainty and avoids rumour and supposition fuelling fear and anxiety.

Create two-way communication channel – creating opportunities for people to ask questions receive appropriate responses.

Ask crew “What would be helpful for you right now?” – Increasing agency and exercising choice can help to allay fears and feel genuinely supported.

Actively Listen and Respond to concerns crew and their families have – honesty is important to build trust. Recognise that anger, fear and distress are all normal responses.



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Family Support

During times of uncertainty, we all worry about our friends and family.

Try to ensure connectivity on board is maintained to allow crew to communicate directly with their family. If connectivity is problematic, consider other ways you can facilitate communication between crew and their family.

Create a communication channel with families to keep them updated on the situation and what actions your company is taking. Assure them that securing the safety of crew is your highest priority. Consider a family contact line, a page on your website that gives the latest information and a daily email to family.

Respond to individual family circumstances wherever possible – provide extra support and facilitate communication in cases of need.

Model Calm and Grounded Leadership – recognise emotional tone can spread through the hierarchy. Publicly recognise professionalism under pressure. Provide clear direction to reduce uncertainty.

Maintaining predictable routines and stability in daily operations can help to distract and contain concerns.

During times of crisis there may be heightened vigilance and extra workload and decision-load strain. Place a priority on fatigue management. Protect rest hours, breaks, mealtimes and encourage supportive interaction between crew members.

Emotional Support

Ensure seniors and all crew and their families know where and how they can access further emotional or professional support. Make confidential support routes visible to crew directly.

Recognise that Masters are also human and may be carrying an additional load in containing and supporting crew during these times. Ask them what support they might need, check-in with them regularly and ensure they feel supported to support others under their command.

Remember the wellbeing of those on shore providing support during these times and ensure they have access to support as well.

Be proactive to do not wait for people to ask for help.

Post Incident and Recovery Planning

Consider psychosocial support response if a serious incident occurs – use evidence-based early intervention response approaches only. These include psych-education, meeting basic needs, psychological first aid and active monitoring. Avoid debriefing which has been shown can be harmful.

Plan ahead for check-ins and psychosocial follow-up once the immediate threat reduces.

Finally – record what works and what doesn't and recognise where the gaps in your ability to respond quickly and effectively have been.