

*For Immediate Release:*

## **Instructional Videotapes Help Vessel Operators Meet STCW Requirements**

At sea, there is nothing routine about a medical emergency.

The inaccessibility of the open ocean makes commercial seamen uniquely dependent upon their own resources when medical emergencies occur. Without the fast access to professional medical support that is taken for granted in the shore side workplace, seamen must undertake not simply the immediate response to a medical crisis, but often the burden of providing extended care for the hours or days required to effect a medical evacuation or ship diversion.

Today, with technology bringing the remotest oceans steadily closer, motivated by moral, financial and legal considerations, leading ship operators have established sophisticated procedures for training their employees to respond effectively to medical emergencies.

Coupled with modern telecommunications that make physician assistance available 24 hours a day, this increased onboard competency means that high levels of emergency care can now be provided by shipboard personnel.

The key is effective training, a reality that pervades what good marine practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century *and* the increasingly stringent regulations developed by the International Maritime Organization and the port authorities of member states.

The 1995 amendments to the IMO International Convention on Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping or STCW demand that *all* shipboard personnel be capable of undertaking an effective *immediate action* in response to a medical emergency (Table A-VI / 1-3).

Junior officers must meet an intermediate level of emergency medical proficiency (Table A-VI / 4-1).

Senior officers designated as *persons in charge* of onboard medical care must be proficient at advanced treatment procedures and case management strategies in consultation with medical professionals (Table A-VI / 4-2).

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Implemented by IMO member nations on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1997, the STCW amendments strengthen the obligations on vessel operators imposed by the International Management Code for the Safe Operation of Ships.

While the ISM Code requires vessel operators to establish training programs and other procedures intended to promote the competency of seagoing personnel, the STCW amendments demand that these procedures be measurable and effective, in specific terms, that seafarers employed on board *are competent, qualified and can indeed perform their duties safely and effectively.*

Today, training programs that give shipboard personnel the ability to gather accurate and essential information about the emergency, and to carry out the consulting physician's treatment instructions, are dramatically improving emergency medical care at sea.

The Maritime Medical Emergencies Video Training Series features emergency room physicians, registered nurses and emergency medical technicians portraying shipboard personnel as they respond to injury and illness scenarios drawn from the case files of actual incidents at sea.

The programs, presented in concise, documentary style, range from seven to 15-minutes in length and demonstrate critical treatment procedures and case management strategies in a shipboard context. Companion *Lesson Guides* facilitate the use of the videotapes in training and offer a means of self-examination and review.

While videotapes can never be a substitute for hands-on training, the Maritime Medical Emergencies Video Series represents a valuable set of instructional tools that can be factored into shore based or onboard training programs, and used as refresher mechanisms for the maintenance of levels of emergency medical preparedness that meet the moral and legal obligations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ship owner.

They are used by leading vessel operators and vocational academies.

According the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Safety Newsletter, "*These programs will be important resources for vessel operators striving to comply with Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping requirements.*"

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Photographed aboard working vessels, this set of 10 instructional programs is available as a two-DVD set.

The series includes the following titles:

- *A Shock to the Heart* (treatment of cardiac arrest)
- *The Eyes Have It!* (treatment of contaminated eyes)
- *Don't Be a Fall Guy* (treatment of severe trauma)
- *An Elephant on the Chest* (treatment of chest pain)
- *Cooking Up Trouble* (treatment of burns)
- *One Hand for the Ship* (treatment of amputation)
- *Use Your Head* (treatment of head injury)
- *Be Prepared* (treatment of seizure)
- *Don't Get Choked Up* (treatment of choking)
- *Green With Envy* (treatment of sea sickness)

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