

5th IAMU Student Assembly Overview Document

Safety Culture in International Maritime Legislation

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SUMMARY

Since the mid 1990's, the idea of a safety culture has not only taken effect, but indeed precedence, in international maritime environmental and safety legislation. A safety culture means that safe and proper methods of shipping and doing business in the maritime industry are not only economical, but a way of life. This idea is actually revolutionary in international maritime regulations, for this means that all parties and people are responsible for any casualties or accidents in shipping.

Realizing that transportation by oceangoing ships will continue to be a method of international trade for many years, regulatory bodies were set up to create and uphold standards for this industry. In the past few years, however, it has been realized that it is very difficult for companies and countries to adhere to all standards set by the IMO. A trend that has arisen is to make regulations more uniform worldwide. The driving force behind this new idea is the safety culture.

A new example of this is the Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme, which has already been adopted by the 23rd IMO Assembly in 2003. This resolution is also known as A.946(23). The interesting aspect of this is that member states of the IMO voluntarily adhere to this policy of the IMO, which will provide them with advice on how to better their performance of safety for both the seafarer and the environment. This is the new way that international regulations are taking: countries have to take the initiative and implement greater standards. Companies are also taking this point of view, especially since it is much more expensive to deal with a casualty situation than to take preemptive measures of avoidance.

Another example of the safety culture taking effect is the new IMDG code becoming mandatory. This code was amended to SOLAS in January of 2004, and makes uniform global regulation of the shipping of dangerous goods. It regards packing, marking, labeling, storage, and segregation of dangerous goods.

There are other examples of the safety culture beginning to seriously become a driving force in international maritime legislature and regulations. Especially with terrorism becoming a grave concern, port state authority and security is strengthening. Classification societies, such as Det Norske Veritas, are also beginning to implement new, uniform, and global standards in their regulations.

It is clear that the only way for international shipping governing councils and bodies to have successful implementation and realization of their goals is the work in uniform and a “safety culture” type of mentality with their member states, and training institutions.

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