



## Occupational Risk Assessment and Evaluation of Safety Culture on Board Ships

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### Abstract

In most cases, seafarers are aware of the health risks involved in their work and know how to prevent the harmful effects. Protective devices are readily available. Ships and shipping companies have adopted national and international safety standards. Yet, occupational accidents continue to occur and many lives are lost every year in the seafaring industry. Often, the reason for ill health and accidents on board ship lies in the human factor, the workers themselves. Safety thinking is missing and unnecessary risks are taken. In the daily practices of work on board ship, safety culture is undervalued. If the rules and regulations are not followed in the daily work, they become only text with no real consequences.

The seafarers' own role in promoting health and safety at work is crucial. The opportunity to participate in safety evaluation and improvement of working conditions increases both the level of knowledge of individual seafarers and their motivation to work safely on board ship.

As part of the TrimMare project, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Finnish Seafarers' Pension Fund developed a method for evaluating the occupational risks of individual seafarers and for activating safety behaviour on board ship. The self-assessment forms are available online at the TrimMare site at [www.elakekassa.fi](http://www.elakekassa.fi).

In the process, each seafarer considers the health hazards of their work with the help of a special four-page checklist covering four risk areas: hazards and defects in the work environment, physical stress, psychosocial stress, and safety culture on board ship (how do you and other crew members operate on your ship).

Four one-hour meetings are held for the whole crew. In the first meeting, the crew members fill in the self-assessment forms, and in the second meeting they discuss the results gained through the forms. In the third meeting, the participants brainstorm about possible actions to improve the situation. In the fourth and final meeting all crew members agree on the practical steps to be taken to improve safety on board ship in their actual work. The cycle can start again for instance after one year.