



Information Bulletin: Prolonged Disruption, Elevated Threat and the Safe Conduct of Maritime Operations

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OCIMF Information Bulletin

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The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF)

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Our vision is a global marine industry that causes no harm to people or the environment.

Our mission is to lead the global marine industry in the promotion of safe and environmentally responsible transportation of crude oil, oil products, petrochemicals and gas, and to drive the same values in the management of related offshore marine operations. We do this by developing best practices in the design, construction and safe operation of tankers, barges and offshore vessels and their interfaces with terminals and considering human factors in everything we do.

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Information Bulletin

Prolonged Disruption, Elevated Threat and the Safe Conduct of Maritime Operations

Audience

OCIMF members, charterers, terminal and vessel operators.

Purpose

To reinforce practical maritime safety considerations during periods of prolonged disruption and elevated threat, with particular regard to how changing conditions may influence operational risk and people's ability to work safely.

Please note that this guidance is not introducing new requirements but reinforcing good practice under changed conditions.

Context

This bulletin supports a measured, practical and safety-focused approach to maritime operations during periods of prolonged disruption and heightened threat. It reflects OCIMF's role in reinforcing good practice and awareness of relevant human factors considerations.

As described in OCIMF's Human Factors Approach information paper, people's ability to work safely, and their overall performance, is shaped by the conditions in which they operate. During prolonged disruption, these conditions may change significantly, influencing behaviour, decision-making, and the effectiveness of controls.

Why this matters

Prolonged disruption and increased threat in affected trading areas can create challenging conditions for ships, offshore vessels, terminals and shore-based organisations. In such circumstances, priority must remain the safety and wellbeing of people, and the safe planning and execution of maritime operations.

Sustained disruption does not only affect schedules, routing and logistics, but also the conditions in which people onboard and ashore are living and working. These may include uncertainty, delays, security concerns, restricted movement, disrupted routines and increased workload pressures. Over time, such conditions can place real strain on personnel onboard, in terminals, and those supporting them ashore, including shore-based teams managing operational and commercial pressures.

These conditions influence how people think, make decisions and carry out their work, increasing the likelihood of error if not actively recognised and managed. This is not a failure of individuals, but a reflection of the environment in which work is being performed. When people are fatigued, under pressure or dealing with uncertainty, the risk of things going wrong increases, particularly during higher-risk or time-critical activities.

Supporting personnel wellbeing is therefore fundamental to safe and responsible operations. Safe maritime and terminal operations depend not only on procedures and equipment, but also on the ability of personnel to perform effectively in the conditions they face.

Key message to members and industry

Members, operators and other industry stakeholders should recognise that prolonged disruption can materially affect how people perform and their ability to work safely and, in turn, the safe planning and execution of maritime and terminal operations.

Controls should be actively reviewed to confirm that they remain suitable for the actual conditions being experienced, rather than those originally anticipated. Particular attention should be given to whether current conditions are increasing the likelihood of human error and whether controls remain effective in practice.

This applies both onboard and ashore. Shore-based decisions, commercial pressures and communications with vessels may all influence how risk is managed in reality. A shared understanding between ship and shore is therefore essential.

Considerations for safe operations

When operating in these conditions, people onboard and ashore should consider whether the current operating environment has:

- introduced new hazards or constraints;
- changed the risk profile of planned activities;
- reduced the effectiveness of existing safeguards, or
- created conditions where human error is more likely.

Assessing this may include:

- re-examining planned operations to identify what has changed and what new hazards or error-likely situations may now exist;
- reviewing whether existing controls and mitigation measures remain adequate, including whether they can prevent, detect or recover from error under current conditions;
- ensuring there is clear, practical and timely communication between ship and shore, with confirmation of shared understanding where necessary;
- ensuring effective ship handover practices are maintained, recognising their role in maintaining shared situational awareness and continuity of safe operations;
- allowing sufficient time for planning, verification and challenge before conducting critical tasks;
- avoiding or minimising simultaneous operations where risk is elevated;
- considering whether critical operations are better undertaken under more controlled conditions, where appropriate;
- recognising that people may adapt how they work in response to conditions, and ensuring that such adaptations do not introduce unmanaged risk;
- reducing unnecessary administrative burden where this may detract from safe operational focus;
- confirming and communicating that essential supplies, medical support and contingency arrangements remain adequate; and
- supporting operational resilience through realistic expectations and sensible prioritisation.

Listen to personnel and support good decision-making

Companies, managers, masters and supervisors should maintain active dialogue with their personnel and genuinely listen to their concerns and experiences.

Personnel experiencing prolonged disruption or heightened threat may identify emerging risks or constraints before these are fully visible elsewhere. Creating space for concerns to be raised, heard and acted upon supports safer outcomes.

Prolonged disruption can reduce people's sense of control and increase pressure on both onboard and shore-based personnel. This may affect confidence, communication and decision-making,

particularly where teams are managing sustained operational demands and competing priorities over extended periods.

Maintaining meaningful involvement of operational personnel in decision-making is therefore important. Companies and managers should take care not to unintentionally remove local decision-making authority through overly directive instruction.

Personnel should feel empowered to raise concerns or challenge plans without hesitation. Open and constructive dialogue between ship and shore is essential.

Companies should also recognise that prolonged disruption may place additional strain on personnel wellbeing and ensure that support remains accessible where needed.

Learning and continuous improvement

Experience gained from operating under prolonged disruption and elevated threat should be captured and shared where appropriate. This supports organisational learning and improves preparedness and resilience. Learning should include not only incidents, but also how work is successfully carried out under challenging conditions.

OCIMF's perspective

OCIMF's interest in this issue is grounded in maritime safety. Personnel wellbeing and wider human factors considerations are fundamental to both the safety and sustainability of operations. Where these conditions are degraded, risk may increase unless it is recognised and managed appropriately.

OCIMF encourages members and the wider industry to take a cautious, practical and safety-focused approach during periods of prolonged disruption and elevated threat, with due regard to the operating environment and the people required to work and live within it.