



VIRSEC[®]



Fully Online Introduction to
Sexual Harassment Awareness
in the Maritime Workplace
Course



**STOP
SEXUAL
HARASSMENT**

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About the Course

This comprehensive online course has been developed to promote awareness, understanding, and prevention of sexual harassment within the maritime workplace.

Designed for all personnel working on-board vessels and within shore-based maritime operations, it addresses the unique challenges of life and work at sea, including cultural diversity, close living quarters, and hierarchical structures.

Participants will explore what constitutes sexual harassment, the impact it has on individuals and wider crew morale, and the responsibilities of organisations to create a safe and respectful working environment.

Realistic scenarios, examples, and guidance rooted in industry standards support learners in recognising, preventing, and responding to inappropriate behaviour.

The course is delivered through interactive modules, making it suitable for both new recruits and experienced maritime professionals seeking to refresh their knowledge.

The Aim of the Course

The aim of this course is to equip maritime personnel with the knowledge, awareness, and confidence to identify, prevent, and appropriately address sexual harassment in the workplace.

By promoting respectful behaviour and reinforcing legal and organisational responsibilities, the course supports a safer, more inclusive working environment that enables the well-being and performance of all crew members.

Relevance Across the Maritime Industry

Sexual harassment awareness and prevention is not limited to a particular vessel type, rank, department, or geographical location.

All maritime personnel; whether at sea or ashore; operate in environments where teamwork, trust, and professional conduct are essential.

The nature of maritime work often involves multicultural crews, long periods away from home, and confined living and working spaces, meaning that respectful behaviour and appropriate interactions are vital to maintaining safety and well-being on board.

This course is designed to support individuals and organisations across the full breadth of the industry.

From commercial shipping and passenger ferries to offshore energy installations, cruise lines, fishing vessels, superyachts, naval fleets, and port operations, every workplace benefits from inclusive and harassment-free practices.

Likewise, staff working in maritime offices, terminals, recruitment, and shore-based support roles share responsibility for upholding safe and equitable standards throughout the organisation.



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A global study of female seafarers reported that 60% of respondents had experienced gender-based discrimination on board, and one in four stated that physical and sexual harassment is a common occurrence within the industry.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Define sexual harassment and recognise behaviours that constitute harassment in a maritime context.
2. Understand the legal and organisational frameworks that govern workplace conduct at sea.
3. Identify the indicators, impacts, and consequences of harassment for individuals, teams, and operations.
4. Demonstrate appropriate responses to incidents, including reporting procedures and support pathways.
5. Apply strategies to contribute to a positive and respectful workplace culture on-board.
6. Reflect on personal attitudes, biases, and responsibilities in preventing harassment.
7. Promote awareness and encourage others to uphold professional standards of conduct

Course Subjects

The Sexual Harassment Awareness for the Maritime Workplace Course includes the following subjects:

- Course Welcome & Introduction
- Introduction to Sexual Harassment in the Maritime Context
- Maritime Work Culture & Risk Factors
- Legal & Regulatory Frameworks

- Reporting, Response & Support Systems
- Leadership, Bystander Intervention & Accountability
- Prevention & Cultural Change
- Resources

Each module is split into multiple sub-topics, making this an informative and relevant course for crew and staff.

Codes & Organisations

The course has been designed taking into consideration the following Codes & Organisations:

- ILO C190: Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190)
- European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA), & European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) Eliminating Workplace Harassment and Bullying: Guidelines to Shipping Companies.
- STCW Table A-VI/1-4 (Contribute to the Prevention of Violence & Harassment at Sea)
- Resolution MSC.560 (108): Amendments to Part A of the Seafarers Training, Certification & Watchkeeping (STCW) Code
- International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment & Bullying.



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A recent survey indicates that active seafarers are up to ten times more likely to experience or witness bullying, harassment or abuse while working at sea compared with individuals who have never served at sea.

Key Reasons This Course is Essential

- Helps create a safer, more respectful and inclusive working environment on board.
- Reduces the risk of incidents escalating by building awareness and early intervention skills.
- Supports compliance with international regulations, maritime codes of conduct, and company policies.
- Protects the mental health and well-being of crew members while improving morale and teamwork.
- Encourages appropriate reporting and response procedures, ensuring every voice is heard.
- Demonstrates a company's commitment to professional conduct and employee welfare.
- Strengthens organisational reputation and helps attract and retain talented personnel.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for attending this online course.

Booking Your Course

Book your fully online Introduction to Sexual Harassment Awareness in the Maritime Workplace Course at VIRSEC.

If you have any questions about the course or any of our other Maritime Training Courses, please contact us to inquire about bulk purchasing and associated discounts.

You can also call us on +44 (0)161 763 4427 and ask for Olivia or Cathy who will happily assist you.

Course Assessment

Upon completion of this fully online course, there is a short assessment, of 30 randomly-selected questions taken from a larger bank of multiple choice, and true or false statement questions. The purpose of this assessment is to demonstrate your understanding of the material and your retention of the information provided.

Course Duration

The duration of the online Sexual Harassment Awareness for the Maritime Workplace Course is approximately 2 to 3 hours.

Course Certificate

Upon successful completion of this online course, the learner will receive a Certificate for the Introduction to Sexual Harassment in the Maritime Workplace, fully Approved by the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS).



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Around 16% of abuse-related welfare calls concern sexual harassment or assault. These figures highlight the pressing need for industry-wide awareness training to safeguard all crew.

Sample Course Slides

Introduction to Sexual Harassment Awareness in the Maritime Workplace
Online Training for Personnel in the Maritime & Ports Environment

COURSE STRUCTURE

The online course for Introduction to Sexual Harassment in the Maritime Workplace is split into the following six Learning Outcomes:

1. Introduction to Sexual Harassment in the Maritime Context
2. Understanding Maritime Work Culture and Risk Factors
3. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks (International and Domestic)
4. Reporting, Response, and Support Systems
5. Leadership and Bystander Intervention
6. Preventive Strategies and Organisational Culture Change



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Gender & Cultural Diversity Issues

Overview	Discussion Prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ships employ crew from multiple countries with diverse cultural norms and gender attitudes. Women are often a minority onboard, increasing vulnerability. Differences in culture or language may lead to misunderstandings or tolerance of inappropriate behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can cultural awareness and sensitivity training reduce harassment risk? What measures can promote a respectful, inclusive shipboard culture?

Scenario

On a cargo vessel with crew from five different countries, female seafarers report that jokes about women's roles are made in common areas. Some male crew do not realise these comments are offensive due to cultural differences.



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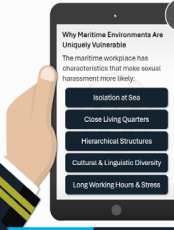
Why Maritime Environments Are Uniquely Vulnerable

The maritime workplace has characteristics that make sexual harassment more likely:

- Isolation at Sea
- Close Living Quarters
- Hierarchical Structures
- Cultural & Linguistic Diversity
- Long Working Hours & Stress

- Isolation at Sea: Crew often spend weeks or months onboard without easy access to external support, making reporting incidents difficult.
- Close Living Quarters: Shared cabins, mess areas, and facilities reduce privacy, increasing exposure to inappropriate behaviour.
- Hierarchical Structures: The chain of command onboard can create power imbalances, discouraging crew from speaking out.
- Cultural & Linguistic Diversity: Ships frequently host crew from different countries, with varying cultural norms around gender and sexuality. This can lead to misunderstandings and complicate the recognition of harassment.
- Long Working Hours & Stress: Fatigue and mental strain in challenging conditions can exacerbate tensions and lead to inappropriate behaviour.

These factors emphasise the need for clear policies, training, and reporting mechanisms tailored specifically for maritime settings.



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Empowering Action at All Ranks

Creating a safe, respectful maritime working environment requires every individual, regardless of rank, to understand their responsibility in preventing sexual harassment.

Onboard vessels, where crews work and live in proximity for extended periods, proactive leadership, confident bystander intervention, and strong peer support systems are especially important.


This module equips learners with the knowledge and practical tools needed to intervene effectively, support colleagues, and uphold accountability across the organisation.



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Example ...



Onboard a cargo vessel, crew members share cabins and recreation spaces. A male crew member makes suggestive jokes in a communal area. Some crew members feel uncomfortable but are unsure if it is "serious enough" to report.

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Peer Support & Allyship Onboard

Supportive peers play a vital role in fostering psychological safety at sea. Allyship goes beyond empathy; it involves proactive behaviours that help marginalised or targeted individuals feel safe, respected, and heard. Effective peer support can include:

- Listening without judgement when someone discloses concerns or experiences
- Reinforcing that the behaviour was unacceptable, helping the affected individual feel validated
- Offering practical support, such as accompanying someone to make a report or helping them document incidents
- Serving as an active ally, challenging inappropriate behaviour, advocating for fairness, and promoting inclusive practices
- Building a community of respect, where crew members look out for one another's wellbeing

Strong peer networks reduce isolation and encourage a collective responsibility for safety and respect onboard.

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