

FOOD AND THE MLC 2006



The Maritime Labour Convention came into force on 20 August 2013, aiming to be the 4th pillar of maritime regulatory compliance along with SOLAS, MARPOL and STCW.

There have already been a number of PSC inspections and detentions of vessels pursuant to MLC matters, and shipowners are well advised to carefully review their compliance with all of its provisions.

Careful attention needs to be paid to the provisions on food and catering under the MLC 2006.

REGULATION 3.2 - FOOD AND CATERING

'Purpose : To ensure that seafarers have access to good quality food and drinking water provided under regulated hygienic conditions'.

For the shipowner or management company, compliance includes taking care of their responsibilities in terms of the MLC 2006 with regards to training and implementations, and to work according to a set of internationally recognized standards.

Also the shipowner or management company should ensure that there is adequate health and safety procedures in place for the specific ship type, and that training includes the handling of food and personal hygiene on board to ensure that food is prepared and served in hygienic conditions.

The Ship's Cook Convention of 1946 was introduced in Seattle. This convention set out the first regulations on standards and practices for the person on board an ocean going vessels who is responsible for the catering.

The world's catering businesses have been working according to a set of international regulations for many years now, originally created by Pillsbury of the USA for the NASA space missions in 1956.

This catering standard was called HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) and is a food safety management system, very similar to the shipping ISM code.

The key points that came out of the MLC 2006 convention in Geneva was a set of guidelines for the training of ship's cooks or for the person responsible for catering on board any vessel above 499 GWT.

The basic knowledge that ship's cooks must have or be trained in are now as follows;

1. Understanding various types of menus and their differences
2. Be able to read, understand and follow a recipe, cultural and religious requirements, and be able to apply this knowledge when planning menus
3. Be familiar with the company menu book, if one applies
4. Be familiar with the rules of menu composition
5. Be able to estimate the amount of leftovers and include their use in menus, reducing food wastage both in the long term and in day to day planning
6. Take into account the role of the senses, the need for variation and importance of nutritional value when planning
7. Be able to understand the importance of weekly menus, and to be able to organize and prepare them
8. Be able to prepare a meal so that the ingredients retain their nutritional content while still maintaining a tempting appearance
9. Be aware of the social aspect of mealtimes and of the practical consequences of this on menu planning, including with regard to special traditions, celebrations and occasions
10. Have an understanding of the interaction between mealtimes and the daily rhythms of work on board and the importance of such interaction in terms of the practicalities of serving meals and snacks
11. Be familiar with what constitutes a healthy diet



A typical fridge on board a ship – but a possible PSC issue

INSPECTION, AUDITING AND TRAINING

When a representative from F.I.T. (Food Inspection Training Ltd) completes an inspection, the key areas focused on are:

1. Is there a Food Safety Management system on board?
2. Is it working and being implemented?
3. It is important to maintain proper records to prove compliance (Due Diligence) in case of an incident or legal claim
4. Is the ship's cook trained to Food Safety Level 2 (QCF)?
5. If not, they need to be trained, and if successful the galley team will be awarded with certificates of competency
6. Safety equipment, digital thermometers, HSE signage will be issued
7. All areas of MLC 2006 Reg. 3.2 will be covered

DIET

Regarding healthier eating, there is the need to understand good menu planning and what it means to provide the crew with a nutritionally balanced diet. The ship's cook has a lot of responsibility to the crew and to visitors on board.

He should be aware of how to manage the provisions available. This means understanding how to store them correctly in order to achieve maximum use out of the ingredients. Today too many cooks use more and more packed items. These tend to have one purpose only, and that is to make life easier rather than focusing on what food values they have.

Healthy eating is very much a matter of education and ultimately, individuals are responsible for their own food intake. However caterers have a responsibility to ensure that a range of healthy alternatives are available, from which the informed diner may make a choice.

Many articles have been written over the years about E numbers, MSG, unhealthy fats and other food ingredients today. Medical research has claimed that they can lead to cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure etc. We have all seen TV features or newspaper articles stating that we should watch what we eat to avoid suffering from food related illnesses.



Frozen chickens left outside become semi defrosted and unsafe to consume



Heavy Mould on pipes and fittings could drop off into food

MLC 2006 Reg. 3.2 has brought the ship's cook into the 21st century. This means added responsibility towards his fellow crew members and to the shipowner, utilizing to his best capabilities what is provided to him or her, adhering to 'best practices' regarding quality food and catering in safe and hygienic conditions.

It is also incumbent on the shipowner or ship management companies to ensure that the ship's cook is trained and supplied with the required tools to do his job successfully and in a safe working environment.

CREDITS

The association is grateful to **David Steele, MIH Director Food Inspection Training Ltd** for contributing to this article.

In case members have any further queries, they are asked to contact the association : lossprevention@skuld.com