



Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston Marine Safety Information Bulletin 37-23

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Ventilation Recommendations for Ships

The Captain of the Port (COTP) Houston-Galveston is seeking to raise awareness of ship owners and operators of their responsibility to monitor climate conditions on board their vessels, particularly while operating during periods of extreme temperatures. Failure to observe accepted international standards governing crew workplace and living arrangements can pose serious risks to the port and prompt intervention measures by oversight authorities, including the U.S. Coast Guard. During the current heat wave, the COTP Houston-Galveston has responded to numerous reports of shipboard crew accommodations, wheelhouses, radio rooms, and other centralized machinery control spaces having inoperable or inadequate ventilation systems which resulted in oppressive living and operating environments. These types of conditions increase the likelihood of crew fatigue incidents, heat-related illnesses, and casualties caused by malfunctioning electronic and/or machinery systems.

Domestic laws, international conventions, directives, and policies are in place which prescribe an expected set of safety, social security, and shipboard condition standards relating to employment, ergonomic design, and living arrangements on merchant vessels. MSC/Circular.982 details work climate conditions for personnel performing certain tasks, with expected on board temperatures ranging anywhere from 69 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit in a warm climate and 64 to 75 Fahrenheit in a cold climate. International Labour Organization guidelines also require that an adequate system of ventilating crew accommodation shall be provided on ships. The system of ventilation shall be capable of maintaining the air in a satisfactory condition and ensuring a sufficiency of air movement in all conditions of weather and climate.

The COTP Houston-Galveston therefore reminds ship owners and operators of their duty to maintain shipboard crew accommodation and workspaces to acceptable international standards of care, to include ensuring installed air-conditioning or mechanical ventilation systems are functioning and properly regulating on board vessel temperature and humidity conditions. If it is determined that operating or living arrangements on a vessel are of such a nature or magnitude to prompt intervention, and a clear threat to the vessel, crew, passengers, or safety exists, then enforcement action, to include deficiencies, fines, detentions, or other similar penalties or control actions, may be initiated under the Ports and Waterways Safety Act [see 46 USC 70002, 33 CFR 1.07, and 33 CFR 160.111(c)].

For more information, questions, or comments regarding this bulletin, the primary contact is Sector Houston-Galveston Port State Control branch at (281) 464-4732 or houstonpsc@uscg.mil.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith M. Donohue".

KEITH M. DONOHUE
Captain, United States Coast Guard
Captain of the Port