



Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviour Survey – Commercial Fishing 2017

Executive Summary

Comparing 2017 and 2014 survey results shows employers are placing more importance on health and safety, and taking ownership of health and safety in the commercial fishing sector.

Sixty percent of workers who have seen Maritime NZ's and NZ Federations of Commercial Fishermen's safety campaign, Safe Crews Fish More, are making changes to improve safety. The campaign began in June 2017.

The most common thing employers had done to improve safety on board vessels was identifying and resolving hazards. The most common action taken by workers was to ensure they and other crew members were not affected by alcohol or drugs while working.

Half of workers report having health and safety training in the last year. This is a positive step and workers who had received health and safety training in the previous twelve months reported improved knowledge of health and safety matters and reduced incidents of serious harm and near misses.

However, this also means half of workers did not have training in that time. Good work is being done and more needs to be done.

Overall, since 2014 there was little major change in workers' and employers' attitudes to health and safety, but in the last year there seems to be the start of improving safety.

While results vary from measure to measure, workers who had been working in the industry for longer (20 years or more) and older workers tend to be more strongly engaged with health and safety.

In contrast, those who had worked in the industry for less time (up to five years) and had personally had a serious harm event or near miss at their work in the last 12 months tend to be less engaged.

There are opportunities for improving engagement particularly among younger workers and those who are relatively new to the commercial fishing sector. There are also opportunities for larger commercial fishing businesses to do more to involve workers in health and safety decisions.

Background

Maritime NZ is the national maritime regulatory agency. Among its responsibilities, it administers the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) for work on board ships and where ships are places of work.

Commercial fishing is of particular concern because it is one of the five industries where most harm is occurring. The others are agriculture, construction, forestry and manufacturing, where WorkSafe is the regulatory agency.

In 2014 WorkSafe began a survey programme to provide health and safety data that can be tracked over time and used to inform interventions to improve workplace health and safety. Maritime NZ requested that the commercial fishing sector be included in the 2014 and 2017 surveys. This note provides a brief summary of some of the key findings of the research.

In 2017 Maritime NZ, in collaboration with the commercial fishing sector, began the "Safe crews fish more" programme to reduce fatalities and serious harm by 25 percent.

Reference - Nielsen. (2018) *Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey. Commercial Fishing Report*. (A report to Maritime New Zealand). Wellington, New Zealand: Author



Key findings of 2017 survey

Commercial fishing employers are invested health and safety leaders:

- Employers are placing more importance on health and safety now than they did in 2014.
- Employers in the commercial fishing sector tend to have more health and safety policies and practices in place compared to many of the other high-risk sectors.
- Employers' ownership of health and safety in the workplace is clear, with most saying the owner, operator, master or skipper has a very big responsibility for crew safety.

Still room for improvement when it comes to health and safety culture and communication:

- There is a large disconnect between the views, perceptions and experiences of workers and employers.
- There is opportunity for improvement when it comes to workplace environment and culture aspects of health and safety.
- Encouraging and helping workers and employers to improve the health and safety culture are seen as the two top things that need to happen.
- Two-way communication is another key element that has room for improvement.

Training is essential to ensure health and safety success:

- There is a relationship between workers having recent health and safety training, improved knowledge, engagement and participation, and reduced incidents of serious harm and near misses.
- Unfortunately, only half of workers report having undertaken health and safety training in the last 12 months.
- When workers and employers were asked what they thought would make the most difference to improving health and safety 'proper training for the job' and 'education' were the two common themes.

Action still needs to be taken to reduce risk in the workplace:

- There is a disconnect between people's perceptions of risk in the commercial fishing sector compared to their own workplace – they consider the risk in the sector to be much higher than in their own workplace.
- Relatively high proportions of workers say they behave in risky ways.
- There have been decreases in the proportions of workers and employers saying that various risky behaviours occur.

There is a disconnect between workers and employers when it comes to occurrences of and actions taken around, serious harm incidents and near misses:

- While 21 percent of workers say there has been an incident of serious harm in the last 12 months, only 8 percent of employers say this was the case.
- The proportion of employers saying that when serious harm occurred it was recorded, action taken and/or it was investigated have all increased since 2014.
- While 43 percent of works say that the last time there was a serious harm incident it was recorded, 93 percent of employers say these incidents were recorded.

Awareness of Maritime NZ good but could be higher:

- Almost six in ten workers are aware of Maritime NZ.
- Of those aware, six in ten think Maritime NZ deserves their support and half say Maritime NZ is doing a good job.