

Yacht crew management best practices



The yacht industry has grown considerably over the past two decades. Vessels are larger than ever, increasing the need for onboard assistance. Regulations and training have attempted to keep up with technological advancements and the size of the average yacht, but one factor remains the same: Choosing the right crew is a critical aspect of safely enjoying your time on the water.

Help with hiring

Crew placement agencies are a popular resource, but ask questions about how candidates are located and vetted. Or, many captains and experienced yacht managers can use their personal networks to find crew replacements. Look for people who are well-established in the industry and who have willing references and strong performance records.

A background check should be completed on all applicants. AIG Private Client Group provides complimentary access to background checks provided by Rehmann Corporate Investigative Services.¹ This information is kept confidential between you, Rehmann and the applicant.

Maintaining a safe and professional work environment

Hiring crew is an important step toward ensuring safety onboard, but take the following actions to foster a successful working relationship:

Conduct an orientation

Before a new crew member participates in daily duties, help him or her acclimate to the new environment and learn your particular safety procedures, equipment locations and general rules. A formal orientation also helps the new hire get familiar with the duties of all other crew members during operations such as docking, washing, provisioning, fueling, and launching and retrieving tenders and helicopters.

Review procedures for events such as a man overboard, fire or abandon ship situation. Orientation also should include a sign-off form that has been developed by your yacht captain and senior officers. It should list important use and location of items, as well as skills necessary to be a safe and integral member of your yacht's crew.

Keep tabs on employment documents and medical insurance

Be sure that all employment documents have been properly filled out and checked prior to allowing the individual to work onboard. You may want to consider providing medical coverage for your crew. If an accident occurs on land during non-working hours, those with medical insurance are less likely to file a claim against the yacht if they have a way to pay for medical expenses.



Offer sexual harassment training

Due to close living accommodations, interaction with guests and other factors, it is important to have a formal sexual harassment program and policy in place. Completion of an educational program should be a mandatory part of the hiring process, and an annual continuing education requirement should be fulfilled by every crew member.

Establish safe working practices

Safe working practices and procedures should be put in place to avoid injury during dangerous jobs. Many routine tasks, such as line-handling, washing the vessel, loading provisions, and working with equipment or tenders are potentially dangerous unless carefully executed. Your captain and senior officers should establish procedures for the safe completion of potentially hazardous tasks based on their experience and knowledge of the vessel.

Enforce training requirements

All crew members should have completed the STCW 95 basic safety training certification. This training gives crew members basic knowledge and practical understanding of safety and firefighting procedures and equipment. Advanced training, such as fire fighting and first aid, should be encouraged onboard. One way to encourage your crew members to broaden their skills and abilities is to offer an incentive or payment plan to assist those who choose to continue their training.

Be mindful of communication and personnel issues

Communication, crew interaction and the safe operation of a vessel are closely interdependent. Crew members live with their co-workers and they aren't able to close the door on the workplace at the end of the day. It is particularly important that relations are professional so that work can be done efficiently.

Document near misses

Near misses are accidents that almost occur but were averted either by chance or by last-minute recognition of an impending event. All near misses should be reported through the chain of command. Your captain should review each situation and hold a briefing with crew members to discuss the incident and how it can be avoided in the future. This creates a proactive, safe environment where risk management and loss prevention become part of the crew's daily responsibility.

Seek assistance with managing your yacht

Yacht management differs from other businesses due to the uniqueness and complexity of the job, as well as the laws governing the marine industry. Employing a qualified yacht management company is a highly recommended way of making sure your yacht and crew are looked after. The best yacht management firms are run by captains who have years of experience in the industry and have operated yachts from onboard and ashore. Quality yacht managers understand the day-to-day operation, crew management, lawful compliance, maintenance and accounting of a properly and safely run vessel. The cost of a qualified yacht manager will generally pay for itself over time.

¹ Eligibility is based on annual account premium.

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