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# **Standard Operating Procedures for Observers (SOPs)**

## ***IOTC ROS TR18.1, 19.1, 20.1 and 21.1***

Category: Onboard Data Collection and Recording

*[IOTC ROS TR18, 19, 20 and 21]*



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- This module aims to raise awareness of Observers on standard operating procedures (SOPs) to follow when deployed on-board a vessel.
- SOPs have been drafted by Chris Heineken and Teresa Athayde based on work in developing the procedures, processes and forms used to run Observer programmes.
- The version of the SOPs presented below has been designed by Teresa Athayde and Saskia Hampton for the Indian Ocean Commission project EEOFISH (2022); and reviewed by Jérôme Bourjea, Chris Heineken and Vincent Lucas.



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## **Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Observers**

The SOPs aim to familiarize Observers with the procedures to follow:

**A. Prior to boarding**

**E. Disembarking**

**B. At boarding**

**F. Upon arrival**

**C. On boarding**

**G. Health and safety**

**D. Daily**



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## A. PRIOR TO BOARDING

Prepare for deployment upon standby notification

1. Prepare personal belongings for the trip (clothes, toiletries, medicaments, comfort foods).
2. Check validity of official documents required for the trip.
3. Undergo briefing and prepare (get issued) work and safety equipment for the trip.



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# 1. PREPARE PERSONAL BELONGINGS

## Receive Deployment Notification From Your Coordinator and Standby

### Settle Personal Affairs



Arrange advance bill payments (rent, water, electricity)



Provide for your family

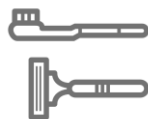


Notify family and friends of imminent departure

### Pack Personal Belongings



Select and pack sufficient work and leisure clothes for the trip



Pack sufficient toiletries for the total trip period (shampoo, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, razor, etc.)



Buy and pack sufficient medicines (paracetamol, vitamins, etc.)



Purchase and pack comfort foods (chocolate, biscuits, fruit, etc.)

# 2. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

## Check your Training, Safety and Identity Documents for Validity:



### IMO (STCW-F)-compliant Certificate of Medical Fitness:

Attests that you can endure normal conditions of life at sea. VALID FOR 2 YEARS.



### International Certificate of Vaccination

May be required for entry into certain countries. Ensure that all required vaccinations are up to date. Pay special attention to the yellow fever and Covid-19 vaccinations.



### Certificate of STCW Basic At-Sea Safety Training

Attests that you have undertaken At-Sea Safety Training. VALID FOR 5 YEARS.



### Basic Observer Training Course Certificate (gear-specific):

Attests that you have successfully undergone Observer training as per sub-regional standards. VALID FOR FIVE (5) YEARS.



### Passport:

Ensure that your passport has AT LEAST SIX MONTHS' VALIDITY FROM THE DAY OF DEPARTURE.



# 3. GET BRIEFED AND ISSUED WORK MATERIALS FOR THE TRIP

## Agree to a Date, Time and Venue for the Briefing Meeting with your Coordinator

### BRIEFING

1. Discuss trip date, time and place of departure, and expected return
2. Receive instructions on sampling details
3. Receive instructions on reporting schedule
4. Obtain a contacts list, listing vessel owner and Observer Programme contact details

### COLLECT, CHECK AND SIGN OFF

#### Personal Lifesaving Equipment



##### Personal Floatation Device (PFD):

wear at all times when working on deck

##### Personal Localisation Beacon (PLB):

designed to communicate your physical location in an emergency



##### Two-Way Communication Satellite Device:

allows for independent emergency and text communications.

#### Personal Safety Equipment

Specialized equipment you are to wear at all times when working on deck to protect yourself from direct exposure to potentially hazardous materials and avoid injury.



### COLLECT, CHECK AND SIGN OFF:

#### Work Materials:



##### Laptop:

- ✓ check it's in good working condition
- ✓ check power cable is packed and functional
- ✓ ensure all necessary software installed and digital documents uploaded

##### Photographic Equipment:

- ✓ ensure all necessary software installed and operational (e.g., automatic allocation of date and time to photos, etc.)
- ✓ check in good working condition
- ✓ check power cable is packed and functional



##### Minimum Sampling Kit:

- ✓ Calliper, ichthyometer, or tape
- ✓ knife
- ✓ waterproof slate



##### Office Supplies:



- ✓ pens, pencils, rubber, sharpener, notebooks, etc.
- ✓ check if sufficient for the total duration of trip

- ✓ Data Collection Forms
- ✓ Observer Work and Sampling Guidelines
- ✓ Observer and Species Identification Manuals

Check you have enough data collection forms for total trip duration.



**FOR EVERY 15 DAYS AT SEA YOU SHOULD HAVE:**

- 1 x Form on vessel/trip general information
- 2 x Forms on fishing gear
- 50 x Forms on fishing event details (set)
- 50 x Forms on fishing event catch details
- 100 x Forms on biometric information
- 10 x Forms on sample collection
- 1 x Form on vessel transhipment



## B. AT BOARDING

1. Upon boarding conduct “pre-sea” safety inspection
2. Vessel must meet “*minimum compulsory requirements*”
  - Valid safety certificate (*in date and not due to expire on the trip*)
  - Life Rafts
  - Life Jackets
  - GMDSS Requirements (EPIRPS, SART, VHF, MF and HF radios)

*Observer may “refuse to board a vessel” if:*

- a) vessel does not meet “minimum compulsory requirements”*
- b) vessel overall state puts its sea-worthiness in question*
- c) If observer refuses to board, a report clearly stating the reasons is to be submitted to the NOP Coordinator immediately.*



# 24 HR BEFORE DEPARTURE

## Conduct Vessel “Pre-Sea” Safety Check Inspection and Fill in Form



### Check Vessel Safety Certificate:

- ✓ is present onboard and valid and not expiring during the following four (4) months at least
- ✓ crew complement, INCLUDING THE OBSERVER, must not exceed the maximum number of crew specified in the safety certificate
- ✓ photograph vessel safety certificate

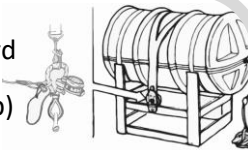
### Check Global Maritime Distress and Safety Systems:



- ✓ are present onboard and compliant with the vessel tonnage and area of operation
- ✓ GMDSS components within service date (are not expiring during the trip):
  - EPIRBs
  - VHF, MF and HF radios
  - SART

### Check Life Rafts:

- ✓ are present onboard
- ✓ within service date (not expiring during the trip)
- ✓ are fitted with a Hydrostatic Release mechanism
- ✓ photograph vessel service documents if service dates are not clear on life rafts
- ✓ have capacity to accommodate full crew and the OBSERVER



### Check Life Jackets:

- ✓ are present onboard and there are enough for the full crew and the OBSERVER
- ✓ compliant with IMO – SOLAS LSA standards

### Request Permission to Photograph the Ship:



- ✓ the side displaying the vessel call sign
- ✓ the stern displaying the vessel name and port of registration
- ✓ the bow displaying the vessel name and registration numbers

Does the vessel meet ALL minimum safety requirements? Is it considered safe?



**REFUSE  
TO BOARD**



**ACCEPT TO BOARD**

**Notify your Coordinator and submit report and evidence.**





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## C. ON BOARDING

1. Meet the captain and other key crew
2. Prepare your living and work area
3. Set your personal work clock to UTC time
4. Familiarize yourself with the vessel's fishing instruments
5. Get acquainted with vessel safety equipment and procedures
6. Check vessel navigation equipment (check lat/long notation)
7. Request bridge officers to help you send deployment report and copy of inspection report to NOP coordinator



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# ON BOARDING

## Meet the Captain and Other Key Crew (Bosun and Cook)



- ✓ Explain your work objectives.
- ✓ Agree on work areas from where you can observe and record:
  - bridge information
  - setting and hauling operations
  - biometric and biological information

## Prepare Your Living and Work Area



## Set All Personal Work Devices to UTC Time:



UTC

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| ✓ watch          | ✓ smartphone |
| ✓ laptop         | ✓ tablet     |
| ✓ digital camera |              |

## Familiarize Yourself with the Vessel's Fishing Instruments



## Get Acquainted with Vessel Safety Equipment and Procedures



## Check Vessel Navigation Equipment



Check Lat/Long notation used by the vessel's different navigation equipment.

- ✓ 

DD	MM	SS
----	----	----

 DMS: degrees, minutes, and seconds  
**Note:** Seconds will always only be recorded as two digits.
- ✓ 

DD	MM.MMM
----	--------

 DDM: degrees and decimal minutes  
**Note:** Minutes can be recorded to more than two decimal places.
- ✓ 

DD	DDD
----	-----

 DD: decimal degrees  
**Note:** Degrees can be recorded to more than two decimal places.

## FOR YOUR SAFETY

### WITHIN 24 HR:

Request bridge officers email your deployment report and copy of vessel inspection report to your Coordinator to open a channel of communication.

### WEEKLY:

Request bridge officers email your weekly status report to your Coordinator to ensure that the channel of communication is kept open throughout the trip.  
The report period refers to the preceding seven (7) days.

**If the report is not received within 24 hr of its due date, your Coordinator will try to establish contact via the vessel operator to ensure that you're safe.**



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## D. ON A DAILY BASIS

1. Before setting
2. During setting
3. Before hauling
4. Monitoring hauling
5. Sampling hauling
6. End of day
7. Upon offloading, shifting and transhipping



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# DAILY INSTRUCTIONS

## Before Setting



- ✓ Ensure you are present at least 30 minutes ⓘ before the setting activity starts.
- ✓ Discuss with the bosun or the lead crew member to understand the setting instructions from the fishing master.

## During Setting



- ✓ Place yourself strategically to observe setting operations without disturbing crew activities.
- ✓ Monitor setting operations and use information to fill in corresponding data-collection forms.

## Before Hauling



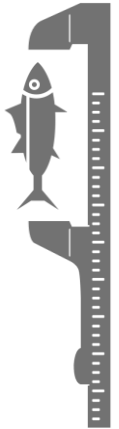
- ✓ Ensure you are present at least 30 minutes ⓘ before the hauling activity starts.
- ✓ Discuss with the bosun or the lead crew member about the sampling protocol you plan to follow.

## Monitoring Hauling



- ✓ Place yourself strategically during the hauling activity so you don't disturb crew work.
- ✓ For every fishing event, even where nothing is caught, gather information on fishing event start and/or hauling date, time and position.
- ✓ Monitor hauling operations and use information to fill in corresponding data-collection forms

## Sampling Hauling



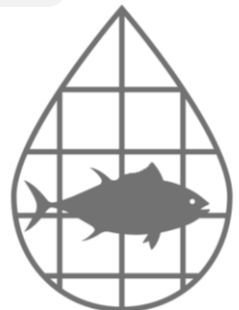
- ✓ Collect biometric information (length, weight, sex, maturity) according to sampling priorities and fill in corresponding data-collection forms.
- ✓ Collect required biological samples (e.g., otoliths, stomachs, etc.) as detailed during briefing and fill in corresponding data-collection forms.

## End of Day



- ✓ Check completed forms
- ✓ Ensure that the header details are filled in and the page numbers are up to date.
- ✓ Ensure that the all-data fields are filled in, completed or dashes have been inserted where required.

## Upon Offloading, Shifting and Transshipping



- ✓ Ensure you are present 15 minutes ⓘ before the start of the operation.
- ✓ Follow sampling protocol provided (if any).
- ✓ Collect required information and fill in corresponding data-collection form.



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## E. DISEMBARKING

1. Instructions to follow prior to disembarking
2. Instructions upon disembarking

## F. UPON ARRIVAL

1. Instructions to follow upon arrival at final destination
2. Tasks to complete one week after disembarking
3. Tasks to complete two to four weeks after disembarking



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# Prior and Upon Disembarking

## Prior to Disembarking



- ✓ Inform your Coordinator of the expected date, time and place of return.



- ✓ Receive instructions from your Coordinator about return travel arrangements.



- ✓ Prepare draft trip report.



- ✓ Provide a copy of draft trip report to the captain.



- ✓ Check that forms are correctly filled and page numbering completed.



- ✓ Fill in the date, time and port of return in your forms



Verify, organize and pack your personal, work, sampling, health and safety materials.

**DON'T FORGET ANYTHING ONBOARD!**

## Upon Disembarking



- ✓ Always keep forms with you. While traveling, keep forms in hand luggage.



- ✓ NEVER HAND FORMS OVER TO A THIRD PARTY OR DEPOSIT THEM!

# Upon Arrival

## Upon Arrival at Final Destination



- ✓ Immediately contact your Coordinator.



- ✓ Submit draft trip report, data-collection forms, electronic data, notebooks and samples (if any).



- ✓ Return trip work materials, personal lifesaving equipment, and personal safety equipment listed on **PAGE 2**.



- ✓ Organize a date, time and venue for the debriefing with your Coordinator.

## One Week After Disembarking: Debriefing

- ✓ Discuss trip data and provide clarifications where needed.

- ✓ Provide general feedback on your trip.

- ✓ Receive general feedback on your work.

- ✓ Obtain instructions to correct any identified errors and improve final trip report.



## Two-Four Weeks After Disembarking



- ✓ Submit final report



- ✓ Submit revised forms



- ✓ Submit revised electronic data collection set



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## G. HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. Sea-sickness
2. Cold and flues
3. Accidents
4. Diarrhoea
5. Fatigue



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# HEALTH & SAFETY

## ACCIDENTS



### Small injuries:

- ✓ clean with an antiseptic solution (or with soap)
- ✓ dress with clean plasters or bandages to prevent infection

### Serious injury or if small injuries fail to respond to treatment:

- ✓ immediately report it to the Captain and controlling authority
- ✓ receive medical assistance on board

**In extreme situations**, prepare to be evacuated to the nearest port, where you will receive medical assistance on land.

### To treat diarrhoea:

- ✓ take medications such as "Imodium"
- ✓ drink extra fluids with small amounts of salt and sugar
- ✓ try to eat normally when you feel better

### If symptoms persist for >24 hrs

report your condition to the Captain and your controlling authority.

### If symptoms persist for >1 week

report it to the Captain and your controlling authority. You'll receive medical assistance on board.

### In case of any of the following signs:

- ✓ presence of blood, pus or yellow mucus in stools
- ✓ inability to drink or hold down water due to vomiting
- ✓ dehydration (small amounts of dark urine, dry mucus membranes, drowsiness).

Report it to the Captain and your controlling authority. Prepare to be evacuated to the nearest port where you will receive medical assistance on land.



## DIARRHOEA



**If symptoms persist for >24 hrs**, report your condition to the Captain and controlling authority. If they involve vomiting, avoid dehydration by drinking enough water to replenish lost fluids.

### To prevent or alleviate symptoms:

- ✓ avoid fatty and spicy foods, alcohol, citrus juices, milk and coffee
- ✓ eat dry crackers or cereals and drink plain bottled water
- ✓ avoid confined spaces and stay in the fresh air
- ✓ focus on the horizon
- ✓ stay busy



### If symptoms persist for >24hrs

report your condition to the Captain and your controlling authority.

### If symptoms persist for >1 week

- ✓ report your condition, as there is a danger of developing pneumonia
- ✓ you'll receive a diagnosis and medical assistance on board

### To alleviate symptoms

- ✓ take flu remedies, and vitamins
- ✓ stay hydrated
- ✓ rest

### If you are having difficulties breathing,

report it immediately to the Captain and your controlling authority and prepare to be evacuated to the nearest port, or onto a suitable vessel returning to port, where you will receive medical assistance on land.

## SEA SICKNESS

## COLDS & FLUS



# FATIGUE

**Lack of sleep** can be extremely dangerous and can cause serious problems.

**Fatigue** can result in poor decisions and slow reactions that greatly increase the risk of accidents and/or injury. To prevent fatigue, plan your work schedules to be able to sleep uninterrupted for at least 6 out of every 24 hours. Correctly assess your level of fatigue.

## ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

Am I having difficulty concentrating?

Am I more irritable than usual?

Am I easily frustrated by tasks?

Do I feel stressed?

Do I work on automatic and without thinking?

Do I feel that I just don't want to cooperate with others?

Do I feel tired and/or yawn all the time?

Am I finding it increasingly difficult to perform more than one task at once?

Do I feel that I just can't be bothered?

Do I fall asleep for small amounts of time?

Am I forgetting to do things more and more?

**In the case of fatigue, sleep uninterrupted for between six (6) and twelve (12) hours.**



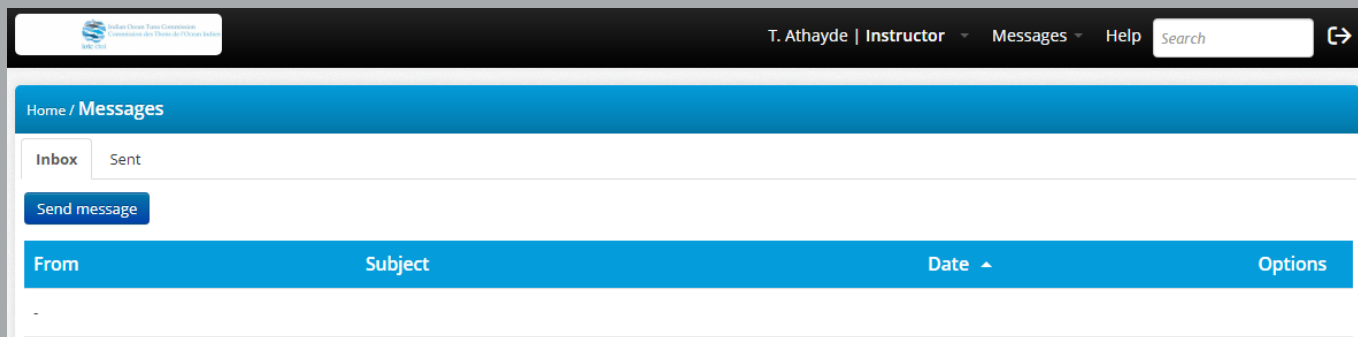


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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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