

Confidential Safety Information Reporting Scheme

Long shifts for ferry crew

A report from a Captain Cook Cruises ferry employee was received that masters and deckhands were rostered to perform long shifts without adequate breaks. Examples were provided by the reporter. It was alleged that on completion of training employees were put onto the hop on - hop off tourist vessels which serviced the Lane Cove River in peak periods. The shifts were broken into two components: am or pm, or as was normally the case, rostered out as one shift. These shifts started at 0600 and finished around 2015 with one 40 minute break. One of the pm shifts did not provide a break at all which meant 7-8 hours of continuous driving which everyone complained about as being too long. Also, on the Harbour City Ferries contract, a number of double shifts were rostered which stretch over 18 hours without proper rest periods. The reporter was concerned that these long shifts could result in fatigue and affect the safety of passengers, crew and vessels.

CSIRS Requirement

As part of the OTSI investigation, a Safety Valve Notification (SVN) was issued to Captain Cook Cruises asking them to address these concerns.

Investigation outcome

Captain Cook Cruises advised that they had investigated the claim made by the reporter and they provided details of their investigation. An extract of this response follows.

Captain Cook Cruises is very aware of the need to ensure that proper rest periods are provided and suitable shift lengths are rostered and adhered to. Our company policy is that at work shift times must not be longer than 13 hours.

The shift identified starts at 630 and finishes at 2000, a spread of hours of 13.5 hours. During this time crews have 3/4 hour rostered off as a rest break. They are employed as master or deckhand for 12.45 hours. These long days only occur on a weekday in the case where a double is assigned. This occurs typically 2 or 3 times per week.

The writer asserts that the afternoon shift does not provide any rest breaks. This is not correct, there are 3 paid breaks for masters and deckhands totalling 1 hour. There is an idle time from 0905 to 1015 (1 hour 10 minutes) where there is typically a 30 minute fuel and sullage period then a rest at Pier 26 for approximately 30 minutes. The second paid break is 15 minutes from 1510 - 1525 and then a 25 minute break from 1643 - 1710 at Pier 26. When the 3/4 hour rostered off or break

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between shifts is added there is a total of just over 1 and 3/4 hour rest or break time on the 630-2000 shift.

The writer also points to an '18 hour' shift without proper rest periods on the Harbour City Ferry service. Through the entire period of the month of August, of the 534 shifts worked by masters and deckhands on the Rocket services, there were 8 times when crew were rostered across a spread of hours from 15-17 hours. There were no shifts with a spread of hours greater than 17 hours. On all but 2 occasions crew had between 3 and 4.75 hours rostered off during this time. The crews on these shifts also have specific "crib" breaks for which they are paid. There is generally at least one crib break of up to 45 mins on both morning and afternoon shifts and in some cases there are 2 crib breaks on the PM shift, making a total of up to 2 & 1/4 hr crib as well as 4 hours rostered off during the spread of hours.

We do however recognise that these longer day arrangements are not ideal and we are taking steps to re-arrange the roster to do away with the need for these shifts.

OTSI Action

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and Captain Cook Cruises have been recorded in the OTSI Safety Investigation Database for future review and trend analysis.

OTSI has advised the reporter of the response and actions provided by Captain Cook Cruises.