

CARGO HANDLING BY SEAFARERS

They order you to stow or secure cargo. They tell you to unlash containers before entering port. Or

while you are alongside. They want to speed up port operations to save money, even if it costs you your life.

Shipowners must stop the cruel and dangerous practice of forcing seafarers to handle cargo. Until they do, seafarers need to say no. It doesn't matter if they offer you extra cash – they're often giving more to the officers who order you to do risky work they wouldn't do themselves. Cargo-handling must always be left to trained, properly equipped dockers.

IS CARGO-HANDLING BY SEAFARERS REALLY A PROBLEM?

Yes. There are great risks to safety at sea and to individual seafarers if untrained, ill-equipped workers handle cargo.

- It's dangerous unless you're properly trained.
- It means much longer working hours and much more fatigue.
- Improperly secured cargo can break loose at sea.
- It's another way the operator makes money out of you.

Crewing levels barely cover maintenance and safe operation of the vessel, and in no way allow for cargo-handling. Port workers respect the hard work and skills of seafarers and in turn ask that cargo is left to them.

WHY ARE SEAFARERS ASKED TO HANDLE CARGO?

Cargo-handling by seafarers is part of the wider deregulation of the maritime industry being pushed by shipowners and the governments that support them. Their aim is to compete by lowering costs. They want to squeeze more from seafarers and dockers through longer working hours and less pay. Shipowners are in the business of making money, not safety – and to make more money, they're undoing protective regulations workers have fought long and hard for.

Shipowners also want to weaken dockers' trade unions by ordering you to do their work. Don't do it. The solidarity shown by port workers has often been critical in the struggle

to win better working terms and conditions for the seafarers aboard the vessel. Dockers are seafarers' natural allies.

WHY IS CARGO-HANDLING BY SEAFARERS BAD FOR SEAFARERS?

The work is dangerous for seafarers because you are not trained or equipped for it. Many seafarers have been badly injured or killed doing it. There have been accidents at sea on vessels made unsafe by badly lashed containers and other cargo.

Cargo-handling adds to the stress and fatigue that seafarers already suffer through long working hours, tight sailing schedules and fast turnaround times. It means less rest time in port and no shore leave when what you really need is to rest. Fatigue is a hazard for seafarers. It is a major cause of accidents in port and at sea.

On top of this, it erodes the power of unionised dockers and their ability to offer you solidarity in times of need. When they lose, you lose.

WHY IS CARGO-HANDLING BY SEAFARERS BAD FOR DOCKERS?

Cargo-handling should only be done by those specifically trained and equipped to do it. Teams of shoreside workers understand their own safe working practices. Mixing crew and dockers on the job can create miscommunications that can be fatal.

If you do the work, it takes jobs from qualified dockers.

WHAT IF I AM ASKED TO HANDLE CARGO?

All ITF-approved collective agreements contain a "non-seafarers work" clause stating that crew shall not be required or induced to carry out cargo-handling. If your ship is covered by such an agreement, ordering you to handle cargo violates that agreement.

IF YOU ARE TOLD TO HANDLE CARGO, SAY NO

To contact an ITF Inspector please use the **Look Up page** on the ITF Seafarers website or download the free ITF Seafarers app (available on iOS and Android).

To contact the ITF Seafarers' Support team in London please email seafsupport@itf.org.uk.

If any of the issues identified are affecting your well-being you have the right to contact your trade union, an ITF Inspector or the ITF Seafarers Support team for assistance. Don't wait until it's too late.

