Ship Positions

Science Party

Chief Scientist

The Chief Scientist is the primary liaison between science personnel and the Master and is responsible for the organization and execution of the scientific program. The Chief Scientist is responsible for the safety of science operations. The Master and Chief Scientist will jointly consider decisions affecting the safety and science. In general, they will choose a course of action together. In those situations where they do not agree, the Master's decision will take precedence.

In planning for the cruise, the Chief Scientist should make sure that the science complement aboard is adequate to accomplish the program. S/He may ask any member of the science party to help with other programs as long as this does not interfere with the person's primary job.

At sea it is the responsibility of the Chief Scientist to see that the scientific program runs safely and smoothly. The Chief Scientist should be informed of any difficulty, whether of a scientific or a personal nature.

Science Personnel

The smooth operation of the science program requires continuing good communications between science and the ship's personnel. If the Chief Scientist has delegated authority to you to work directly with the bridge, have the following in mind: keep the watch informed. Give the bridge as much advance notice as possible on work site coordinates. If the Mate and the Engineer are not advised of your intentions well in advance, the watch may have to keep you waiting while they prepare for the next maneuver. If you are looking for a good work site or are waiting for the results of your last experiment before you make your next move, tell the bridge what is happening.

NEVER put any gear over the side without first consulting the bridge.

If a problem having to do with the scientific program arises during your watch, no matter what the hour, call the Chief Scientist or whomever has been designated as in charge.

When you are on watch and your relief arrives, explain everything in sufficient detail so the relief will know exactly what the situation is and can continue the routine without a break.

Keep your equipment secured to the bench or deck at all times in case of unexpected foul weather or abrupt ship maneuvers.
The Master of any vessel is required, first, to exercise all efforts to protect the lives and safety of the crew and all other persons on board; Second, to maintain the seaworthiness of the vessel; and third, to protect the interests of the Institution.

In fulfilling these duties, the Master is responsible for complying with the laws of navigation and a whole body of statutes which regulate ships and seagoing matters. A failure to do so can make the Master subject to a suspension of license and personally to fines and penalties.

Each crew consists of three departments: ¹ Deck Department: Those crew members who report to the Chief Mate. ² Steward’s Department: Those crew members who report to the Steward. ³ Engine Department: Those crew members who report to the Chief Engineer.

The officers and most of the crew are divided into three four-hour watches or work periods. Each watch party works two four-hour periods a day and is off duty during the remaining sixteen hours. Each watch stander works overtime as needed in addition to two four-hour watches assigned to him/her every day at sea. Watches are as follows:

0800 to 1200 and 2000 to 2400
1200 to 1600 and 2400 to 0400
1600 to 2000 and 0400 to 0800

In Addition to the Master, the Ship’s Personnel are:

**Deck Watch Officer (Chief, Second, or Third Mate)**

The Deck Watch Officer is in operational control of the ship and is stationed on the bridge and must be informed in advance of all science activities involving over-the-side work and/or maneuvering of the ship. He/she may summon the Master to the bridge any time the situation warrants.

**Boatswain (Bos’n)**

The Bos’n is the immediate supervisor of the deck crew under the Chief Mate and/or Deck Watch Officer. He/she is the key figure in the execution of deck and over-the-side work. The Boatswain oversees the operation of the ship’s deck equipment including winches and cranes and the maintenance of the ship’s structure.

**Chief Engineer**

The Chief Engineer is responsible for the operation and maintenance of ship’s machinery and the work of all members of the Engine Department.

**Engineering Watch Officer**

(First, Second, Third Assistant Engineer, or Junior Engineer) S/He is stationed in the engine room and is responsible for the operation of the ship’s propulsion, auxiliary machinery and other systems.

We use cookies to analyze site usage and improve user experience. By continuing on this site, you consent to their use. Read our Privacy Policy for more info and to amend settings. OK

**Oilers**

Oilers are responsible to the Engineer on watch and their duties involve maintenance and operation of ship’s machinery.
**Steward's Department**

This department usually consists of a Steward, one Cook, and one Mess Attendant. The Cook prepares three meals a day and provides food for night lunches. Attendants assist the Cook, serve meals, clean the galley and mess deck.

**Electrician**

The electrician is responsible for the maintenance of the ship's electrical systems.

**Communications Electronics Officer**

A ship may have a communications officer who is responsible for the operation and maintenance of ship's communications equipment including medium, high and very high frequency voice and teletype radios, cellular telephones, satellite voice and data systems and associated computers. All radio traffic is subject to the approval of the Master.

**Medical Officer or Corpsman**

A medic may be carried when the vessel operates in remote areas; s/he is responsible for ship's medical supplies. Otherwise these duties revert to the Master who may delegate them to the Chief Mate. WHOI ships subscribe to a medical advisory service through which medical doctors are on call 24 hours per day via ship-to-shore communications.

**Shipboard Scientific Services Group (SSSG)**

**Technician/Marine Technician**

Technically not a member of the crew but a member of the Shipboard Scientific Services Group. The chief function of this person is to work with the science party integrating science provided equipment to ship systems and instructing members of the science party in the use of shipboard data acquisition systems and equipment.