
New film on seafarers' fatigue

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On Thursday 7th July Cardiff University hosted the launch screening of a 30-minute research film highlighting the significant problem of fatigue in the seafaring industry. Whilst many seafarers work in excess of 70 hours a week, it is only through disasters such as the Exxon Valdez, in which fatigue was cited as a contributory cause, that attention is drawn to this otherwise largely hidden community.

The film has been produced by Paul Allen who is both a researcher at Cardiff University and an independent film director. Allen saw the opportunity to try an innovative approach to research dissemination using film media, as he explained: "Research findings are normally written up in reports and papers which rarely go beyond an academic audience. I've seen the problem of fatigue at sea first hand and felt impassioned to explore new ways of communicating our research findings to a larger audience. Given my experience in film this felt like the ideal method".

The research film, funded by an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) knowledge exchange grant, was produced to disseminate findings from an earlier research project by Cardiff University. The 30-minute film combines expert interviews from across the maritime industry with research findings to give an engaging insight into this serious and growing problem.

Fatigue has become an increasing problem in the seafaring industry as a combination of intense market forces, regulatory challenges, and globalised labour sourcing has led to a situation where over-worked seafarers are afraid of speaking out for fear of losing their jobs. Whilst the UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has been highlighting the problem of fatigue for a number of years, it is sadly the case that most accidents see little media reporting due to the fact that the industry is largely hidden from public view and consciousness, despite the fact that around 90% of all goods are transported by sea.

The film was made publically available online following the launch event at www.seafarersfatigue.com.