



Gulf Coast Mariners Association

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WAYS TO RETAIN NEW CREWMEMBERS AND KEEP SEASONED CREWS

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The cost of recruiting and hiring a new crewmember includes:

Drug Test = \$45.00 to \$75.00

Physical Exam = \$75.00 to \$100.00

Shoreside Training (if any)? If it is good, it's priceless!

1. Stop using employment agencies that charge mariners. **This is illegal.** Read 46 U.S. Code §10505(b) included in GCMA Report #R-415-A on our website.
2. Pay decent wages and annual cost of living increases. Set licensed mariners' pay according to the issue # on the license, the tow size, and the mariner's knowledge of the waterways he is posted on.
3. Extra pay for "riding over" beyond scheduled relief date and "short crew" pay when vessel sails short-handed.
4. Work hours not to exceed 12 in a 24-hour period except in emergencies.
5. Offer Holiday Pay New Years, Mardi Gras (regional), 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.
6. Provide full health, dental, vision & disability insurance for crewmembers. Pay 50% of the coverage for dependent family members. Coverage begins on day of employment to protect mariner.
7. Provide a company retirement plan or 401K contribution.
8. Pay for licensed or documented mariners to upgrade or renew their credentials. Assist them to prepare the required Coast Guard documentation including sea service and any other required letters.
9. Provide license defense insurance to avoid conflicts of interest.
10. Provide fast efficient, safe, clean, and non-smoking transportation to and from vessel. Read GCMA Report #R-398, Crew Van – Death Van.
11. Avoid requiring long drives to and from the vessel as when one vehicle makes crew changes on multiple vessels.
12. Do not require fatigued crewmembers to take over the watch upon arrival. Read GCMA Report #R-370-D. Work-Hour Abuse, Whistleblower Protection and "Deadhead Transportation.
13. The U.S. Surgeon General and public policy warns of the cumulative health dangers of second-hand smoke. Provide non-smoking vessels for non-smoking crews. Pay an incentive to non-smokers. Read GCMA Reports #R-341 & R-341-A.
14. Provide realistic grocery and supply budget including provide safe bottled drinking water. Read GCMA Report #R-395, Safe Potable Water and Food Service for Commercial Vessels of Less than 1600 Gross Register Tons: An Appeal To Congress.
15. The company should maintain their vessels well and make crews proud of their "home afloat" and their company.
16. Adequately crew your vessels for the service the vessels are engaged in since many routinely operate short handed
17. Keep full crews on board at all times. Crew size on towing vessels pushing 6-pack or 1180 ft. tows on the Intracoastal Waterway should be a three-man deck crew with two men on a 6 & 6 ("square watch") and one man on a "Call Watch." (understanding that no crewmember should work over 12 hours in a 24-hour period and be provided with at least 6 hours of uninterrupted sleep. On locking rivers with 15 barge tows towboats should carry a 5 to 6-man deck crew, with two men on the tow and one man on the lock wall. On the Lower Mississippi River 15 to 40 barge tows should carry a 5 to 6-man deck crew. Read GCMA Report #R-370-G, GCMA R-375, Crew Endurance: The Call Watch Cover-up.
18. Any vessel 1,500 horsepower and above should carry an engineer.
19. Any person preparing food must have formal sanitary training.
20. Any vessel in 24-hour service should have a cook or person that has formal dietary and food preparation training.
21. All Deckineers must have documented safety training before entering the engineroom and vocational training covering the tasks they regularly perform. Read GCMA Report #R-428, Report to Congress: The Forgotten Mariners. Maritime Education & Training for Entry-Level Deck & Engine Personnel.

Invest in your vessel crews:

22. The vessel crews are the people that move the cargo. An investment in the crew should be looked at as money well spent.
23. Enforce company and Coast Guard requirement for safety meetings, fire drills, and man overboard drills and insist that they actually be held. Hold vessel Masters responsible.
24. Hand out quarterly safety rewards to crewmembers that practice safety. Example: When a crewmember goes three months without having an accident or injury, award him/her a pair of safety boots, personal work vest, or float coat. The longer an employee goes without a lost-time accident, the larger the incentive and reward.
25. Be sure work gloves, foul weather gear, and flashlights are readily available.
26. Every crewmember who goes out on a tow must carry a VHF hand-held portable radio.
27. Allow no crewmember alone on the tow except after notifying the officer on watch. The officer has an obligation to watch the crewmember(s) on the tow.
28. Hypothermia kills. In cold weather, all deck crewmembers must have an exposure suit for protection against both cold air and cold water temperatures. For water temperatures, the Coast Guard, in NVIC 7-91, identifies 59°F as the defining number for “cold water” for regulatory purposes.
29. The more crewmembers that you keep alive and uninjured are fewer crewmembers that need replacing.

Shoreside employees and vessel-crews should work as a team:

30. Shoreside personal need to respect the vessel crews and the vessel crews need to respect shoreside personnel. Shoreside management personal must stop using intimidation and “Blackballing” tactics.
31. Management must stop using known drug users as crewmembers.
32. If the captain fires a crewmember for being unsafe or unruly, do not move the problem to another vessel. “Terminate” the problem.
33. Give your licensed officers back the respect that they earn and deserve from their experience.
34. Vessel’s crewmembers need to respect their superiors.
35. Enforce a dress code. Example(s): No pants worn down at the knees; No head gear at the galley table; Must wear a shirt with sleeves in the galley; No work gloves in the galley; No tobacco use in the galley at any time.
36. Promptly honor requests by a Captain for a drug search or drug screen on his vessel.
37. Require crewmembers to “go through the chain of command” before calling the human resource department.
38. Do not allow crewmembers that are on watch to play video games or watch television. Allow the use of personal cell phones only when off watch except in an emergency.
39. If a Captain refuses to overload his vessel with more barges than his vessel and crew can navigate with safely, then the company should respect his views on safety. After all, the company entrusts their Captain with a vessel worth millions of dollars and a tow loaded with millions of dollars of cargo and should have confidence in his judgment.
40. If the Captain asks for equipment to be repaired, replaced or supplemented to make the job safer and easier for his crew, then cost should not be a real issue.

This is **NOT** meant to be a Quick fix to all the problems we face. We all need to work together and take pride in our industry. The seasoned mariners are where the real navigation knowledge is hidden and not in some simulator or computer.