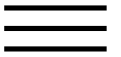


Not drowning, waving!: safety management and occupational culture in an Australian commercial fishing port.

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Not drowning, waving!: Safety management and occupational culture in an Australian commercial fishing port

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Abstract

An ethnographic study of safety management was conducted in a commercial lobster fishing industry, in a small fishing town in Southern Australia. The objectives were to test the utility of the ethnographic method for exploring the nature of the relationship between occupational culture, workplace social organization, and safety management.

Available accident data suggests this particular fishery may not have the same high incidence of occupational trauma normally attributed to commercial fishing. Changes in licensing laws and improved management of fish stocks have significantly reduced risk exposure. Participants in this study had a good understanding of their physical workplace risks, but accepted some of these with too few defences. Wear rates of personal flotation devices (PFDs) were below 1% for the study period.

The paper suggests that participants do not have a strong learning culture, and links this to occupation-wide cultural assumptions, other external issues and safety management issues. Assessment of the social and cultural context of safety management can offer policy makers a "road-map" to guide their interventions. The utility of ethnographic methods for this type of analysis is significant, and will be enhanced by improving the transparency of the research method.



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Keywords

Ethnography; Commercial fishing; Safety management; Safety culture

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