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Seafarer salaries still rising in a crew-led market

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Pacific Basin

Seafarer salaries are continuing to rise across the globe as the shortage of competent seafarers impacts the shipping industry across all sectors, according to a new survey from Danica Crewing Specialists. The survey shows that with a surplus of job offers available, seafarers can afford to be more picky – choosing positions not only on salary but also on issues such as a more convenient joining date or a fleet with younger vessels.

Wage increases have occurred this year on all vessel types. The survey observes that Indian senior officers on dry cargo vessels continue to receive the highest wages – some 10% higher than their Eastern European and Filipino peers, who are remunerated at approximately equal levels at senior ranks. However, Filipino junior officers are paid less than their Eastern European and Indian peers.

Henrik Jensen, Danica Crewing Specialists CEO, commented: “The combination of a general shortage of, and a hunt for well-competent seafarers, along with a better financial situation for most vessel owners at present, is making employers more generous with their remuneration and causing wages to continue to increase.”

Jensen also warned he was seeing a steep increase in CVs with fake experience.

“Seafarers are using certain consultants to help with crafting these fake CVs and the level of falsification is rather advanced,” he said.

Danica surveyed its database of almost 70,000 seafarers worldwide, as well as reaching out to other crew via social media. Some 4,868 seafarers from a range of vessel types completed the survey. Data was collected between May and September 2024.

At a time when there is fierce competition of competent crew, it might be expected that seafarer wellbeing would be a priority for employers. Yet the Danica 2024 Seafarers’ Survey records rises in crew welfare concerns. In particular, the number of seafarers reporting shortage of food and drinking water continues to be alarmingly high at 25% and increased from 20% back in 2019. Seafarers reporting they have not been paid on time remains high at 35% – only 1% less than in 2023, while 7% said they did not receive their salary in full. Although the number of seafarers not being relieved on time has fallen significantly since the pandemic, there are still one in five seafarers who do not get home on time.

One in eight of respondents reported experiencing bullying and harassment at sea, while 35% reported non-compliance with statutory rest hours rules. The number of seafarers who felt mentally depressed during their last contract increased from 11% in 2023 to 14% in 2024.