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IAATO Online Field Staff Assessment & Logbook

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Information Paper submitted by IAATO

Summary

IAATO views training and experience as lynchpins of its mission: safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to Antarctica. Over the past two years IAATO has instigated three initiatives to improve field staff training. The first was outlined in ATCM XXXII IP87 *IAATO Field Operations Manual (FOM)*. The second, which took place prior to the 2008/09 season, was the creation of an IAATO Expedition Staff Logbook, enabling field staff to record in a standard format their experience, qualifications and training. The third is the establishment of an online field staff assessment scheme which is currently being piloted by IAATO field staff. The online assessment is designed to augment the training and test the knowledge of field staff on the contents of the Field Operations Manual. The online assessment scheme will be rolled out for the 2010/11 season where initially all ship based expedition leaders will be asked to take part.

Introduction

IAATO views good training and experience as key factors in ensuring best practice in safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to Antarctica. Continual efforts in this regard remain a driving factor in IAATO's annual goals and project development. It is noted that field staff in particular play a key role in the stewardship of the Antarctic and in the practical application of ATCM and IAATO guidelines, codes of conduct and standard operational practices. The creation of a Field Operations Manual, reported in ATCM XXXII IP87 *IAATO Field Operations Manual (FOM)* was part of a wider field staff training and assessment initiative in essence providing a "course manual" (e.g. the critical guidelines and operating procedures as well as additional resources available) to ensure best practice. In addition, during the past season two further initiatives have been undertaken.

IAATO Expedition Staff Logbook

In October, 2009, IAATO published an Expedition Staff Logbook. This logbook is intended to complement existing logbooks that expedition or field staff might also use such as mountain leader logbooks or a seaman's book. The logbook provides a mechanism to record special qualifications (e.g. technical qualifications such as STCW¹, Mountain Leader, Instructor qualifications, or related academic or professional qualifications), membership of professional organizations, additional skills, and previous Antarctic experience, plus record their relevant experience going forward. By also giving a suggested list of courses, qualifications and personal development initiatives, the logbook aims to provide a framework for field staff wishing to develop their skills.

Online Field Staff Assessment

Using an "off-the-shelf" online test mechanism, IAATO has developed a field staff assessment with the aim of assisting field staff with pre-season training. Currently, the assessment is broken divided into five sections covering:

¹ Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW)

- Regulations and Management,
- Operational Practices,
- Environmental Mitigation Practices,
- Area Protection and
- General Knowledge.

Within these five sections, participants must answer 90 multiple-choice questions selected at random from a bank of 200 questions during a specified time period. To pass, field staff must achieve at least ninety percent.

In this first development phase, the assessment focuses largely on vessel-based operations in the Peninsula. However, the aim is to develop region-specific sections (e.g. Ross Sea, Sub-Antarctic, etc.) and a specific land-based section, which can be selected according to the participant's area of interest.

The IAATO Field Staff Online Assessment is currently going through a Pilot Phase which opened on March 1, 2010 and will run for two months. A report on the outcome of the pilot stage will be presented at IAATO's Annual Meeting in June, 2010 with the intention of having all ship-based expedition leaders completing the assessment before the 2010/11 season.

In order to better examine the details of the online assessment, Treaty Party and/or national Antarctic program representatives are welcomed to log-on and try the Field Staff test mechanism on an audit-basis. For further information, contact IAATO.

Looking Forward

For successful practical application of ATCM and IAATO guidelines, codes of conduct and standard operating procedures, initiatives to promote training and experience should remain a high priority item. Furthermore, the online assessment initiative is intended to be an additional element of a broader IAATO accreditation / auditing program which is under development.

IAATO will continue to invest in this training effort and welcomes comments from both Treaty Parties and National Antarctic Programs on how to improve or further promote these and future initiatives.