

**GUIDANCE TO SHIP OPERATORS AND SEAGOING SCIENTISTS CONCERNING CROSSING AND
OTHER MILESTONE CEREMONIES ABOARD SHIP OR IN PORT**

University National Oceanographic Laboratories System (UNOLS)
Maintaining an Environment of Respect Aboard Ships (MERAS) committee

Morale and teamwork play vital roles in the efficiency, success and safety of oceanographic research, especially by improving communication between all participants. As such, activities that encourage collaboration are beneficial to the success of the science mission. Scientists and crew must be able to work together, guided by policies that promote respect and supportive interactions. Recognition of milestones, noteworthy geographic crossings, and celebrations of achievements are encouraged by MERAS. These activities should be welcoming, triumphant, and fun—not divisive or “othering”.

Ceremonies that commemorate line crossings (e.g., equator, date-line, polar circle) or other achievements as significant life-events for scientists and crew are encouraged. But these events should be designed to be welcoming, celebratory, and free of harassment and hazing. Supervisors (e.g., captain, chief scientist) should ensure that all participants are treated with dignity and respect during such events.

Crossing ceremonies have traditionally drawn a line between experienced and inexperienced crew (including science) members requiring a ritual to join the ranks of the experienced or initiated. Some associated activities, however, stemming from old maritime rituals can be demeaning and border on hazing. This kind of activity, while intended in fun, can distance individuals from feeling welcome or even cause some to reconsider pursuing a career at sea. Behavior that is degrading, embarrassing, or injurious is hazing; it is unprofessional, and it is illegal. Actual or implied consent to acts of hazing does not eliminate the culpability of the perpetrator.

Hazing can include, but is not limited to the following:

- Verbal abuse or threatening bodily harm
- Shaving, greasing or painting an individual or group of individuals
- Excessive physical activity
- Requiring consumption of food, alcohol or drugs
- Smearing or coating the body or clothes with dangerous or unsavory substances
- Requiring actions or skits with demeaning or sexual connotations

Opting out of these activities, can further “other” individuals unwilling to participate. This separation divides teams rather than bringing them together. This othering can be avoided. Using a crossing ceremony as an example, supervisors should inform cruise personnel that participation in a recognition ceremony is voluntary and will not include any rituals or tasks required of participants. It should also make clear that anyone wishing to receive a certificate commemorating the milestone will be issued one—regardless of whether or not they choose to

participate in the ceremony or related event-commemorating activities (e.g., games, skits). Organizers may also wish to pre-announce activities so participants do not get drawn into something they did not expect.

Institutions and host ship operators all have policies on hazing which take precedent and reporting procedures that should be articulated with guidance. This white paper is meant to provide the perspective of the UNOLS community on best practices that can be adopted. By establishing new 'traditions' of positive and inclusive ceremonies, we foster an environment that encourages diverse, collaborative, and successful teams working aboard research vessels.