

# Leaders of tomorrow

## Profiling young professionals in the South African fishery

**F**ishing is among the most dangerous professions in the world. Nobody knows this better than Rusdien Domingo, the head of safety at Viking Fishing's busy South Arm fishing hub.

Rusdien has been at the centre of Viking Fishing's drive to prioritise and promote a safety culture since 2005. In that year, Viking lost the inshore trawler, *Lindsay*, in a tragic accident. The fishing vessel collided with the 161m bulk carrier *Ouro de Brasil* off the coast of Cape St Francis and 14 men lost their lives.

A Marine Court of Inquiry was established by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) to probe the accident and, in the process of assisting his managers at the Inquiry, Rusdien gained a deep understanding of the incident and the associated safety issues. As a result, when Viking Fishing introduced a comprehensive Safety Management System, Rusdien was an obvious choice to ensure its successful implementation.

Rusdien began his career in fishing 27 years ago as a processing assistant in the cold store at Viking Fishing. After a year in this tough, physically demanding job, he was transferred to the Shore Safety department where he began working as a safety assistant, responsible for "fire watch". This is a routine job, but one that is vital for the safe repair and maintenance of fishing vessels. The fire watch system ensures that any kind of "hot" work – welding, cutting, grinding and any other activities that have the potential to start fires – is conducted in a safe place and is carefully monitored by a safety officer.

Rusdien's seven years in fire watch gave him a basic knowledge of safety management, but it was a month-long in-house training course that took his career to a new level. He trained with a professional risk manager and gained a deep understanding of what it takes to implement a Safety Management System in Viking's highly diversified fishing fleet.



Two promotions followed Rusdien's completion of the safety training course and in 2016 he was elevated to his current job, head of safety at Viking Fishing. Rusdien is assisted by Morris Motebele, Anthony de Bruyn and Ebbadalla (Ebbie) van Niekerk, who each take responsibility for one aspect of the Safety Management System. Morris assists with safety on board the vessels when they are being discharged, replenished, repaired or maintained alongside the quay; Anthony assists with safety of the fishing vessels when they are working at sea; and Ebbie is responsible for safety in the Viking Fishing buildings and workshops that adjoin the quayside. In fact, visitors to Viking Fishing's quay will be familiar with the members of the Viking Safety Department because one of them is always on hand to ensure that visitors are wearing the right safety gear and are guided safely between moving cranes, forklift trucks and other potentially hazardous machinery that is used on the quayside.

Rusdien says that the scope of his job is very broad. He is knowledgeable about a host of laws and regulations that apply to the safe operation of fishing vessels, including the Merchant Shipping Act and the Marine Occupational Safety Regulations, and he is required to stay informed about changes or updates to the legislation. Any changes are immediately incorporated into the Viking Fishing Safety Management System.

On a day-to-day basis he works very closely with the skippers, chief engineers and mates who sail on Viking Fishing vessels, and he also interacts with the vessel superintendents who ensure the vessels are properly repaired and maintained and are seaworthy at all times.

Safety briefings are held before every fishing voyage, and a "handover" inspection whenever a vessel docks.

"One of the most rewarding parts of my job is when a vessel returns to Cape Town and there have been no incidents," he says. "I've been in the fishing industry for a long time and I know how serious some incidents can be for everyone involved, so it is very rewarding when everything goes well."

Rusdien and his team play an important role in preparing each vessel for its annual SAMSA survey and the Safety Management System is audited by SAMSA once a year. In January, the audit went off without a hitch and the System received a clean audit.

"That showed that we are on the right path," said Rusdien, "the challenge is to keep it like that. There is always room for improvement."

Rusdien is currently working hard to complete a comprehensive revision of Viking Fishing's Safety Management System. He hopes to complete it in April this year.



**SADSTIA** South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association

**52** members unlocking the value of the Cape hake resource