

RISING THROUGH THE RANKS

MAKE HEADWAY WITH A CAREER AT SEA

writer **FIONA TERRY** // photographer **TIM CUFF**

"I love that every single day there's something different going on," says SAM ROBERTSON regarding his role as an engineer aboard a Sealord fishing vessel.

The 21-year-old joined the company as a trainee engineer expecting to take at least two to three years to qualify for promotion. Instead, it took him just seven months to achieve the qualifications needed, enabling him to quickly rise through the ranks to become second engineer aboard the company's vessel *FV Thomas Harrison*.

"This job keeps things interesting – there's always something new to learn," says Sam, from Waiuku.

"My role is pretty much to maintain or fix broken things on the boat. The main part of my work is in the engine room or factory where I could be fixing a conveyor belt, a water pump, or servicing and maintaining the engine and auxiliary engines.

"But there's day-to-day work on cabins or other parts of the boat too, so I could be fitting a TV in someone's room or doing work on the hot water system."

Sam left Pukekohe High School at 16, after being offered a job as a motorcycle mechanic just a couple of weeks after his Year 11 exams. As well as the standard subjects at NCEA Level 1, he studied Science, Calculus and Hard Materials.

"I pretty much failed everything except Hard Materials, which I passed with flying colours," he says. "I've always liked doing things with my hands and used to love taking things apart and rebuilding them, especially my little motorbike that needed fixing all the time. Anything with a motor I'd just love to pull apart."

He spent some time on a farm fixing tractors and machinery before the opportunity to join Sealord opened up, so he has had plenty of experience with hydraulics too.

Sam is now working towards his next marine engineering qualification, MEC 5, something he says Sealord supports employees through with full pay and covers expenses for.

"On the boat I have a room to myself, everyone's real welcoming and the meals on board are so good! In my downtime I can catch up on movies I've downloaded.

"The pay's really great. I'm saving money for a house, and one of the other things I really love about the job is the amount of time we get off. That's where you can go travel or spend time at home.

"I'm really big on watersports and then in the winter I do a lot of four-wheel driving and snowboarding, so it works out well for me that I've got all this free time to do the things that I love as well."

He's also grateful for the opportunity to travel with the company, with the vessels sometimes docking in Dunedin as well as Nelson. There is discounted air travel to reach the boat or return home.

"There are so many other potential opportunities to travel too, with one of the factory boats going to Australia sometimes and another boat based out of Mauritius.

"When I was younger, I thought my dream job would be a mechanic but there's a lot more money to be made being an engineer at sea and there's a lot more variety too."



KEY FACTS



- **SAM ROBERTSON** IS SECOND ENGINEER ABOARD THE **SEALORD** FISHING VESSEL **FV THOMAS HARRISON**.
- ON FULL PAY AND WITH EXPENSES COVERED BY **SEALORD**, HE IS WORKING TOWARDS HIS **NEXT MARINE ENGINEERING QUALIFICATION, MEC 5**.
- **SAM** WORKED AS A MOTORCYCLE MECHANIC AND SPENT TIME ON A FARM FIXING MACHINERY BEFORE JOINING **SEALORD** AS A **TRAINEE ENGINEER**.

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