

## **MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 97 OF 2004**

(Navigational and Seamanship Safety Practices)

### **Notice to Owners, Operators and Persons -in-charge of Dumb Steel Lighters – Precautions to be Taken for Avoiding Shifting of Containers**

#### **The Accident**

An accident occurred on 26 December 2003 in that containers from a locally licensed dumb steel lighter (DSL) fell overboard. After departure from the loading berth with a slight list to port, the DSL was anchored at about 30 metres off the Container Terminal No. 9 awaiting berth at the Modern Terminal No. 5 for discharge of containers. At that moment, two tugs passed by the DSL and the wakes generated made the DSL to further heel to the port side. As a result 26 containers stacked on the third, fourth and the fifth tiers shifted and fell overboard one after another on the port side. A crewmember who was working on top of the fifth tier of containers also fell overboard with the containers. He was subsequently rescued by a nearby tug.

2. Investigation revealed that the accident was caused by :-
  - (a) the DSL had an initial slight port list;
  - (b) the containers were stacked up to five tiers high but only kept in position by means of stacking cones; and
  - (c) the heavy cargoes inside the containers were not properly secured.

When the DSL encountered wakes from the passing vessels and heeled further, the cargo inside the containers shifted causing the containers to slip out or topple to overboard.

#### **Lessons Learnt**

3. Important lessons that should be learnt from the incident are:
  - (i) Loading of DSL should be evenly distributed to ensure the vessel remains upright.

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- (ii) The use of stacking cones alone would not be able to prevent heavily loaded containers from slipping out or toppling if the vessel carrying the containers is subject to excessive heeling or rolling. Containers should be adequately secured using appropriate securing gears, such as bridge fitting and twistlocks etc.
- (iii) Container cargoes should be properly packed and secured to avoid shifting inside a container during transportation.

4. Owners, operators and persons-in charge of DSLs are requested to take note of the incident and the lessons learnt to avoid recurrence of the accident.

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Director of Marine

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