

Marine Department Notice No. 136 of 2005

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Precautions of Man Falling Overboard During Cargo Handling in Adverse Weather Conditions

A fatal accident occurred recently in which a Chinese seaman on board a river-trade vessel fell overboard from the shipside when the vessel was undergoing container cargo operation at Western Anchorage No. 2 at around midnight. At the time of the accident the weather was rainy, with strong sea current flowing in a direction from Ma Wan to Lamma Island. The seaman was quickly carried away by the strong current and later drowned. All efforts by the crew to search and rescue him were in vain. The investigation into the accident revealed the absence of contingency planning for emergency situations on board the vessel and the crew lacked general safety awareness and proper safety training.

2. In the light of the accident and the investigation findings, owners, masters, operators of locally licensed vessels, stevedores, owners and agents of Mainland coastal and river-trade vessels and persons in charge of works are urged to take the following precautions to safeguard personnel at work, in particular, during cargo handling operation under adverse weather and sea conditions:

- (i) Whenever practicable, workers staying or engaging in mid-stream operation on deck should don a lifejacket if there is a risk of falling overboard however slight;
- (ii) In addition to donning of lifejacket, a lifebuoy with a sufficient length of buoyant safety line should be kept on deck in the vicinity of the place of work ready for use in case of emergency of man falling overboard. For coasters and river-trade vessels of about 50m length or over, the lifebuoy should be placed near amidships to allow easy access by the crew working on deck;
- (iii) Workers should use proper access passageway on deck and avoid standing or walking on areas that are more susceptible to

losing balance, tripping or falling down, bearing in mind that the vessel is subject to movement induced by cargo handling, wind and wave effects;

- (iv) The crew engaged in container handling in Hong Kong should be educated on the importance of safety at work, and should undergo approved or recognized shipboard cargo handling basic safety training to acquaint them with the potential hazards of mid-stream operation in Hong Kong, as well as the emergency procedures to deal with emergencies that require quick response; and
- (v) A works supervisor should be assigned in each work shift to monitor safety at work. He should continuously assess the effect of the weather and sea conditions and ensure that crewmembers use appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment on deck, including lifejackets, highly visible vests and slip-resistant safety footwear.

S. Y. TSUI
Director of Marine

Marine Department
Government of the HKSAR
Date: 6 September 2005
Action File Ref: SD/MISS 117/ 1(3)