

Marine Department Notice No. 17 of 2010

(Navigational & Seamanship Safety Practices)

Safety Precautions During Closing of Tarpaulin Covers For Cargo Holds

Recently, a Chief Engineer onboard a Chinese registered river-trade cargo vessel fell overboard at the Western Anchorage and was drowned. At the time of the accident, the Chief Engineer was rigging the tarpaulin tent to cover the cargo hold. The vessel was maneuvering at the time and this movement blew the tarpaulin tent in the air causing the Chief Engineer to lose balance and fall over the side.

2. The investigation revealed the following main contributory factors :-
 - The deceased did not appreciate the hazards of trying to rig the tarpaulin tent when the vessel was being maneuvered; and
 - The deceased did not use a safety harness and lifeline nor wear a lifejacket while working aloft and near to the ship side.
3. To avoid recurrence of similar accidents, the attention of masters of vessels are drawn to the following important advices:-
 - Crewmembers responsible for handling the tarpaulin cover should be provided with adequate training, be aware that rigging the cover when the vessel is being maneuvered is an unsafe practice and that at any time strong winds may cause the cover to flap and pose a danger;
 - When working at height and/or near to the ship side, the crewmembers should always use the appropriate safety harness with lifeline and lifejacket; and
 - There should be an effective means of communication between those who are rigging the cover.

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