

26 Containers fell overboard from a locally licensed dumb steel lighter

A. The Incident

1. At about 0130 on 26 December 2003, while the locally licensed dumb steel lighter Kam Ying 18 (金盈 18) was anchoring off the Container Terminal No. 9 waiting for its berth, 2 passing-by tugs generated wakes which made the vessel to heel to the port side. Simultaneously 26 containers onboard the vessel shifted and fell overboard one after another on the port side.
2. The weather conditions were fine with northeasterly wind at force 2.
3. A crew member who was working on top of the fifth tier of containers also fell overboard with the containers. He suffered considerable injury.

B. Findings

1. The dumb steel lighter was reported to have developed a slight list to port before the accident.
2. The containers loaded onboard the dumb steel lighter were kept in position by means of stacking cones. The use of stacking cones alone would not be able to prevent containers from slipping out or toppling if the dumb steel lighter is subject to excessive heeling or rolling.
3. The damages sustained to the containers remaining on board revealed that the containers had been subject to localized stress. The cargo stowed inside the containers might have been shifted and generated a momentum which might cause shifting of the containers.

C. Lessons

1. Loading of dumb steel lighter should be evenly distributed to ensure the vessel is upright.
2. Containers should be adequately secured using appropriate securing gears, such as bridge fitting and twistlocks etc., before the departure of vessels.

Figure 1 Condition of a damaged container

