

# **Crew fatality and injury while securing anchors on board M.V. Aotearoa Chief on 14.8.2004**

## **1. The Incident**

- 1.1. At about 1806 on 14.8.2004, three seamen on the forecastle head of the container ship Aotearoa Chief were struck by a wave that broke over the ship's bow. One man was thrown against the windlass and mooring machinery and suffered injuries from which he later died. Another sustained severe lacerations to one leg while the third man was unhurt.

## **2. Findings**

- 2.1. The two men were injured, one fatally, when a large wave broke over the forecastle head, throwing them against ship machinery and structure.
- 2.2. The instruction given by the master to secure the pilot ladder and anchors did not convey his claimed intent for the crew not to secure the anchors until he further instructed.
- 2.3. A strong southerly wind, combined with an opposing ebb tide and shoaling waters, probably caused an 'abnormal wave' which was larger than ones either preceding or succeeding it.

## **3. Lessons**

- 3.1. Master should carefully plan the course, speed and/or position of their vessel to minimize the risks to crew members working on exposed decks.
- 3.2. A Merchant Shipping Information Note (43/2005) should be issued to promulgate the lessons learnt from this incident, drawing the industry's attention on the importance that all seafarers should remain actively cognizant of the prevailing weather and sea conditions when working in exposed areas.