



Report of Investigation
into the Fatal Accident of a
Crewmember while Working
on Forecastle of “Yong Tong”
in Heavy Weather
on 16 November 2005



The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Marine Department
Marine Accident Investigation Section

Purpose of Investigation

This incident is investigated, and published in accordance with the IMO Code for the Investigation of Marine Casualties and Incidents promulgated under IMO Assembly Resolution A.849(20). The purpose of this investigation conducted by the Marine Accident Investigation and Shipping Security Policy Branch (MAISSPB) of Marine Department is to determine the circumstances and the causes of the incident with the aim of improving the safety of life at sea and avoiding similar incidents in future.

The conclusions drawn in this report aim to identify the different factors contributing to the incident. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability towards any particular organization or individual except so far as necessary to achieve the said purpose.

The MAISSPB has no involvement in any prosecution or disciplinary action that may be taken by the Marine Department or others resulting from this accident.

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1. Summary

- 1.1 On 16 November 2005, the Hong Kong registered ship *Yong Tong* (the Vessel) was en-route from Singapore to Port of Rizhao in China. The weather was very rough with very high seas. At 0710, the Carpenter was seen taking breakfast in the mess room. At around 0800, when the Vessel was in a position 22° 03'N 121° 20'E and on a course of 041°T at a speed of about 8 knots, the Carpenter was found lying on the forecastle deck without breath and pulse. There was a deep wound on his left chest. The Carpenter was delivered to the hospital of the Vessel for medical treatment. After a few hours of medical treatment, his life could not be recovered.
- 1.2 It was suspected that the Carpenter was thrown against the windlass by the waves which broke over the ship's bow. He got seriously injured and died subsequently. The contributory cause of the accident was due to the Carpenter's failure to appreciate the dangerous nature of going out to work on exposed deck in heavy weather and also his failure to obtain prior approval from the Master or duty officer of the Vessel to carry out work on forecastle in heavy weather condition.

2. Description of the Vessel

2.1 M.V. *Yong Tong*

Port of Registry	:	Hong Kong
IMO No.	:	9228019
Call Sign	:	VRXH9
Type	:	Bulk Carrier
Length	:	216.73 metres
Breadth	:	32.26 metres
Gross Tonnage:	:	38641
Classification Society	:	American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)
Year of Built	:	2001
Propulsion Power	:	Kawasaki M.A.N.– B&W/ 8,295 kW



3. Sources of Evidence

- 3.1 The Master of the Vessel;
- 3.2 The ship management company of the Vessel;
- 3.3 Accident report submitted by the Master of the Vessel;
- 3.4 The ship's file in the Hong Kong Register.

4. Outline of Events

- 4.1 In the morning of 16 November 2005, the Vessel was in a position 22° 03'N 121° 20'E. The wind and sea conditions were very rough at Beaufort Scale 9. Large sea waves and swell were approaching from a northeasterly direction. The vessel was proceeding on a course of 041°T at a speed of 8 knots and was shipping seas on the bow at all times.
- 4.2 At 0710 the Carpenter was seen taking breakfast in the mess room. Since he did not turn up to attend the deck working meeting at 0745, the Bosun instructed the sailors to search for the Carpenter in the accommodation but there was no sign of him. As the Bosun discovered that the Carpenter's safety helmet, working clothes and shoes were not in the changing room and the watertight door leading to the main deck on the port side had been opened, the Bosun and a sailor went forward to the forecastle to search for the Carpenter.
- 4.3 On arriving at the forecastle, the Carpenter was found lying on the deck in a position aft of the port windlass. His face was pale and he had no breath and no pulse. A severe wound was found on his left chest. At 0830 the Carpenter was carried on a stretcher and brought to the ship's hospital for emergency medical treatment. After a few hours of medical treatment, it was determined by the Master that the Carpenter had died after checking the Carpenter's body temperature, blood pressure and pulse.
- 4.4 At 1120 the body of the Carpenter was put inside a body bag and stored in the ship's refrigerator for postmortem examination when arriving at the port of Rizhao. From the autopsy report, the cause of the death of the carpenter was severe bleeding arising from serious injury to his left chest.

5. Analysis of Evidences

Experience of the Carpenter

- 5.1 The Carpenter was an experienced seaman with a total sea service of about 20 years and had been working in the capacity for almost 17 months.

Physical condition of the Carpenter

- 5.2 The Carpenter had a medical examination prior to joining the Vessel on 17 June 2005. There was no evidence that the Carpenter had suffered from bad health. The other crew members were not aware that the AB had taken any medicine or alcohol before he commenced duty in the morning.

Weather conditions

- 5.3 At the time of the accident, the weather was very rough. There was a strong gale i.e. a force-9 wind with a speed of about 44 knots and a very high sea causing large sea waves and swell. As the wind was northeasterly and the Vessel was on 041°T i.e. an almost northeasterly course, the ship head was against the waves and swell causing a large amount of seas to be shipped on the bow. Under the above circumstances, any crew members working on the forecastle would be subject to a risk of injury by the waves that broke over the ship's bow.

The safety awareness of the Carpenter

- 5.4 The Carpenter did not assess adequately the wave condition before carrying out work at the forecastle deck. There was a general lack of appreciation of the dangerous nature of the operation. Working on deck in a rough sea situation is dangerous. The force of waves could kill anyone in the path as they swamped. In this situation the Carpenter was risking his own life by working alone at the forecastle under heavy weather condition. It was suspected that the waves which broke over the ship's bow had thrown him against the windlass and he suffered serious injury without immediate medical treatment and subsequently death as a result. Apparently, the Carpenter did not report to the Chief Officer before proceeding forward. Otherwise, the ship's course could be adjusted to allow a sheltered area for the Carpenter to work in rough weather.

International Safety Management (ISM) Manual of the Vessel

- 5.5 The ISM Manual of the Vessel had laid down the safety procedures for crew working in exposed deck in rough weather. However, the Manual does not stipulate that prior approval must be obtained from the Master or duty officer before carrying out work in exposed deck in rough weather.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 At about 0800 on 16 November 2005, the Hong Kong registered ship *Yong Tong* was in a position 22° 03'N 121° 20'E, the wind and sea conditions were very rough at Beaufort Scale 9. The Vessel was shipping seas on the bow at all times.
- 6.2 The Carpenter did not turn up to attend the deck working meeting after breakfast and he was not found in the accommodation. The Bosun and a sailor went forward to forecastle and found him lying on deck without breath and pulse. Despite emergency medical treatment rendered to the Carpenter in the ship's hospital, his life could not be recovered.
- 6.3 The Carpenter did not assess adequately the wave condition and obtain prior approval from the Master or Chief Officer before carrying out work at the forecastle. As a result, the Carpenter was thrown against the windlass by the sea which was shipped on the bow. There was a general lack of appreciation of the dangerous nature of the operation.
- 6.4 Had the carpenter reported to the Bosun prior to carrying out work at the forecastle, he would not be allowed to go out to work on exposed deck in heavy weather or alternatively, the ship's course could be adjusted to allow a sheltered area for the Carpenter to work. In this connection, the accident could have been avoided.
- 6.5 The safety procedures laid down in the ISM Manual of the Vessel did not require crew members to obtain prior approval from the Master or duty officer before carrying out work in exposed deck in rough weather.

7. Recommendations

7.1 A copy of the report should be sent to the ship management company of the Vessel. They should be advised of the findings of the accident and the importance of instructing their crew members to report to and obtain approval from the Master or duty officer of the Vessel prior to carrying out work on exposed deck in heavy weather. The above requirement should be incorporated in the ISM Manual of the Vessel.

7.2 A Merchant Shipping Information Note (MSIN) should be issued to draw the attentions of all concerned parties to the lessons learnt in the incident.

8. Submissions

8.1 In the event that the conduct of any person or organization is commented in an accident investigation report, it is the policy of the Marine Department to send a copy of the relevant part of the draft report to that person or organization for their comment.

8.2 The draft report was sent to the ship management company and the Master of the Vessel at time of the incident. There was no reply from the management company and the Vessel.