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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

A fatal fall to the bottom of a cargo hold when cleaning on the coaming top face plate

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Crew

Summary

During cleaning of the gutter way of a cargo hold using water hose, a sailor standing on top of the hatch coaming lost his balance and fell to the bottom of the cargo hold and died. This Information Note draws the attention of the shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew on the lessons learnt in the accident.

The Incident

1. A Hong Kong registered general cargo ship was anchored in Kohsichang, Thailand after completed discharging of cargo. Ship crew members were assigned to clean the deck and hatch covers of cargo holds, including their gutter ways.
2. During cleaning the gutter way at the top of a cargo hold hatch coaming, the safety harness of a sailor, who was working on top of the cargo hold hatch coaming with a water hose, was tangled by the flattened water hose. He unhooked his safety harness from the guard rope and tried to free his safety harness of tangling. His colleague assisted him to straighten the bend on the hose. Suddenly, the flattened water hose under the foot of the sailor was inflated and jerked causing him to lost his balance and fell into the cargo hold. He sustained serious injuries and was certified dead in the hospital.
3. Investigation into the accident revealed that:
 - a) without taking notice of the risk of falling at height, the victim unhooked the lanyard of his safety harness from the guard rope; and
 - b) the unexpected violent movement of the hose was caused by a sudden recovery of the flow of water under high pressure.

Lessons learnt

4. It is important that all officers and crew on board ships should follow shipboard safety procedures in carrying out specific tasks. The associated risks of the tasks must be carefully assessed before commencement of the tasks. Crew members involved in the tasks should take care of themselves and their co-workers. The task should be supervised by senior officer.

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