



香港商船資訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

A fatal fall to the bottom of a cargo oil tank after cleaning

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Shipbuilders, Classification Societies, Masters, Officers and Crew

Summary

A crew member on board a Hong Kong registered chemical/oil tanker accidentally fell down to the bottom of No.3 port cargo oil tank (3P COT) when he was climbing up the access ladder after tank cleaning. He was seriously injured and declared dead on the next day. This information note draws the attention of Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Shipbuilders, Classification Societies, Masters, Officers and Crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. A Hong Kong registered oil/chemical tanker under ballast condition was en route to Fujairah, United Arab Emirates from Tanjung Pelepas, Malaysia. Cargo oil tank cleaning operations were in progress preparing for the loading of clean petroleum product at the next loading port.
2. The master authorized a team consisting of an Able Body Seaman (AB) and a Trainee Ordinary Seaman (TOS) entering into the 3P COT for tank inspection and cleaning after verifying the tank condition. After completion of the tasks, the TOS left the tank but fell from the access ladder at height and died eventually.
3. The investigation had identified the main contributory factor that the risk of fall from COT access ladder was not assessed properly thus failing to prevent the falling of the TOS from height.

4. The following safety issues were also found in the investigation:

- the vertical ladder had no guard rings and the big gap of the side rail of inclined ladder near the uppermost platform might allow the TOS to fall sideways if he lost his balance on the ladder; and
- the company's procedure for using fall arrestor devices had not been strictly followed by ship's crew.

Lessons Learnt

5. It is important that all officers and crew on board ships should strictly follow shipboard safety procedures when carrying out any tasks involving tank entry and working aloft. The associated risks of the tasks must be carefully assessed and preventive measures must be in place before commencement of the tasks. The tasks should be supervised by senior officers and crew members should take care of themselves and their co-workers. Ship management companies should also consider the following safety aspects:

- to fit guard rings on the vertical ladders, and fitting of intermediate bar for the side railing of the inclined ladder inside COTs to reduce big gaps in order to minimize the risk of falling sideways from the inclined ladders; and
- to remind all their officers and crew members that the company's procedures or guidelines should be strictly followed, and in particular, fall arrest devices should be used mandatorily while using first vertical ladder of any COT.

6. The attention of Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Shipbuilders, Classification Societies, Masters, Officers and Crew is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

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