



香 港 商 船 資 訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

A fatal accident involving lifting of a heavy object in engine room

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

Summary

During routine sea chest strainer cleaning at sea on board a Hong Kong registered container ship, a heavy sea chest cover suddenly falling from height and fatally hit the fitter working underneath. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. When the engine room crew of a Hong Kong registered container carrier carried out routine cleaning of a sea chest strainer at sea, they lifted the heavy sea chest cover using a chain block with a non-conforming sling, and then shifted the cover aside using a second chain block. Loosely dangling from the second chain block, the cover was rested on the engine room lower deck platform at a height of about 2 metres from the sea chest strainer.
2. Shortly afterwards, the wire forming an “eye” at one end of the sling slid out of the bulldog grip, resulting in the cover toppling over, hitting the fitter working under the platform to death.
3. The investigation revealed that the contributing factors to the accident are as follows:
 - (a) The engine room crew failed to carry out a full assessment of the risks involved and the control measures required to lift a weighty strainer cover by making reference to the “Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers” (*the Code*); and
 - (b) the sling assembly, including the fitted bulldog grips, did not conform to the recommendations detailed in *the Code*, in the following ways:
 - (i) the sling assembly used only one bulldog grip at “eye” end instead of a minimum of three;

- (ii) the bulldog grip was tied in a wrong direction; and
- (iii) the wire used for forming the sling was plastic coated and was not suitable for lifting operation.

Lessons Learnt

4. Ship crew have to ensure strict compliance with the company's procedures, guidelines and *the Code* on maintaining lifting gears and performing lift operation; in particular the application of bulldog grips.

5. Senior officers should carry out a full assessment of the risks involved and the control measures required for lifting heavy objects.

6. The attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

Marine Department
Multi-lateral Policy Division

15 June 2020