



香 港 商 船 資 訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Crewmembers washed overboard in heavy weather

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

Summary

A man overboard incident occurred on board a Hong Kong registered ship when passing the Cape of Good Hope in heavy sea condition. The ship's Bosun was washed over the shipside by following sea that shipped over the aft deck. This Note draws the attention of the Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters and Officers to the safety precautions when dealing with deck emergency situations in heavy weather condition.

The Incident

1. On 18 August 2005, a Hong Kong registered ship was en-route from Brazil to China via south of Africa, ship's course at 075° and speed 8.5 knots. At around 1000, a man overboard accident occurred when passing the Cape of Good Hope in heavy sea condition. The Bosun was washed over the shipside by the following sea that shipped over the aft deck. At the time of accident the Bosun together with other three crewmembers were carrying out an emergency recovery of the mooring ropes at the aft deck. The waves also caused injury to the three crewmembers. After the accident the ship returned to search for the Bosun but could not find him.

Lessons Learnt

2. Before commencing a sea voyage, it is important that the mooring ropes should be stowed below deck inside the rope locker in order to prevent them from exposure in rough weather. Investigation revealed that the probable cause of the incident is that the mooring ropes had not been stowed in a sheltered space during the sea passage. After sailing into rough weather area the heavy following sea swamped over the aft deck and badly damaged the steel rack locker containing the mooring ropes.

3. During the emergency recovery of mooring ropes at the aft deck, the Chief Officer did not coordinate with the Master before sending the crewmembers into operation. Otherwise the Master could have changed the ship's course to alter the approaching direction of the sea waves and to prevent the aft deck from swamping by the following sea waves during the emergency operation.

4. In an attempt to retrieve the rope, four crewmembers untied their safety harnesses and rushed to the aft deck to recover the rope that slid over the shipside. This sudden action had rendered them unprotected from the waves and the danger of being washed overboard. When carrying out any work in hazardous situation, it is important that safety of life should be the paramount consideration. Selfless acts by individuals in undertaking work of a dangerous nature without taking reasonable and necessary precautions will put them at risk and should not be encouraged.

5. The attention of ship managers, ship operators, master and officers is drawn to the lesson learnt above.

Marine Department
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