



香 港 商 船 資 訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Fatal accident happened during cargo hold cleansing

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

Summary

A sailor on board a Hong Kong registered ship sustained fatal injuries to his head after falling down from the top of a hopper plate to the bottom of cargo hold. This Information Note draws the attention of the shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew to the lessons learnt from the accident.

The Incident

1. When a Hong Kong registered bulk carrier vessel was sailing at sea, crew members were assigned to cleanse the cargo holds including the upper part of the side shell in order to prepare the cargo holds for loading grain cargo. In order to cleanse the upper part of the side shell, crew members had to climb a portable aluminum ladder to reach the top of the hopper plate to continue to climb a fixed vertical ladder so as to reach the upper part of the side shell.
2. At the time of the accident, a crew member climbed back to the top of the hopper plate (about 4 meters high above the bottom of cargo hold) after he had finished his work. Suddenly, he slipped on the hopper plate towards the bottom of the cargo hold and further slid about three meters on the bottom surface before stopping. His safety helmet had flown off and his head knocked against the bottom of the cargo hold while falling down. He was declared dead on board the vessel.
3. Investigation into the accident revealed the main contributing factors as follows:
 - a) the deceased did not anchor his safety belt to any strong point when he was staying at the top of the hopper plate;
 - b) the deceased lost his balance and slipped while staying at the top of the hopper plate which was an acutely inclining surface and probably was wetted by washing water during cargo hold cleansing;

- c) the deceased's safety helmet had flown off and his head knocked against the bottom of the cargo hold while falling down; and
- d) no senior officers were there to supervise the operation.

Lessons learnt

4. It is important that crew members on board ships should be aware of the danger of staying at the top of hopper plates inside cargo holds, which are usually acutely inclining surface and probably wetted by washing water during cargo hold cleansing. Crew members should remain their alertness to avoid a slipping and should use safety belt at all time.

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

Marine Department
Multi-lateral Policy Division

3 August 2015