



香港商船資訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Fatal accident due to falling at height from a vertical ladder inside the cargo hold

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

Summary

An inexperienced seaman of a Hong Kong registered ship fell at height from a vertical ladder and died. 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 woodchip carrier was sailing at sea, crew members were engaged in cargo holds cleansing work. An ordinary seaman, who had about one month seagoing experience, was assigned to assist an able bodied seaman to cleanse the forward part of the No.1 cargo hold.
2. The able bodied seaman entered the cargo hold through the forward access hatch and climbed down the vertical ladder to the first landing platform of the ladder to cleanse the upper part of the cargo hold. The ordinary seaman was staying next to the access hatch on deck to provide assistance if needed.
3. After finished cleansing the upper part of the cargo hold, the able bodied seaman left the cargo hold for a rest in the crew accommodation and he told the ordinary seaman not to enter into the cargo hold. For reasons unknown, the ordinary seaman entered the cargo hold without the knowledge of others. When climbing down the vertical ladder, he fell down from height till the third landing platform. He was sent to a hospital by a helicopter and he was later certified dead on the same day.

4. The investigation revealed the following contributory factors of the accident:
- a) the vertical ladder was wet and slippery when cleansing work was carried out inside the cargo hold;
 - b) the ordinary seaman underestimated the risks of entering the cargo hold through a wet and slippery vertical ladder; probably he might not have maintained a three-point contact (either two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand) while climbing the vertical ladder or slipped or lost his grabbing on the ladder; and
 - c) the ordinary seaman was an inexperienced seaman but was not closely supervised.

Lessons learnt

5. It is important that inexperienced crew members on board must be closely supervised at work. All crew members should not underestimate the risks of climbing a long vertical ladder, in particular when it was wet and slippery.
6. 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

30 May 2016