

# **Fatal Accident of a seaman onboard Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “Joyous Society” in Panama Canal on 8 August 2013**

## **1. The incident**

1.1 On 8 August 2013, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier *Joyous Society* (*the vessel*) was transiting the Panama Canal. When *the vessel* was just clear of the Pedro Miguel locks, seven crewmembers were assigned to rig an accommodation ladder in combination with pilot ladder for the disembarkation of the canal mooring crew and the pilots.

1.2 In order to fasten removable stanchions with ropes on the accommodation ladder, one of the seaman II, stepped on the lower platform of the accommodation ladder. Unfortunately, the lower platform turned over and he fell into the water of the Panama Canal at about 0953 local time. Search and rescue operation was carried out after reporting to the canal authority but in vain. The body of the seaman II was found two days after the incident.

1.3 The investigation revealed the following contributory factors to the accident:

- The shipboard working procedure had not been followed. The crew members working overside of the vessel had not donned the required personal protective equipment;
- The high risk work over the ship’s side while the ship was underway was carried out by an inexperienced seaman II and no crewmember supervised the operation properly; and
- Lack of proper maintenance to the accommodation ladder causing its platform locking pins coming off the locking position and the platform turned over while the seaman II was stepping on it.

## **2. Lessons learnt**

The lessons learnt from this incident are:

- The management company of the vessel should ensure the shipboard working procedures were implemented and the maintenance work of the accommodation ladder was properly carried out.