

Fatal accident of a stevedore on board the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “Vienna Wood N” at R union Port, an insular region of France in the Indian Ocean, on 7 July 2015 (All time were Local Time UTC +4)

1. The incident

1.1 On 3 July 2015, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier Vienna Wood N (the vessel) was moored alongside a berth in the port of R union, an insular region of France, to discharge cargo.

1.2 After the completion of cargo discharge inside the No.2 cargo hold at about 2145, the crane operator of the stevedores company, who operated the No.2 ship crane, left the control cabin of the ship crane. About 30 minutes later, his body was found lying on the bottom of the crane trunk. The crane operator was certified dead on board.

1.3 There was no witness to the accident. It was deduced that the crane operator lost his grabbing on the ladder and fell down to the bottom of the crane trunk while climbing down the internal vertical ladder. He fell to his death as he hit against the water ballast tank valves control block.

1.4 The investigation into the accident revealed the main contributory cause was as follow:

- the crane operator did not take necessary precautions as he did not stay alert to avoid falling from height when climbing on a vertical ladder which was not fitted with guard rings to prevent falling sideways.

2. Lessons learnt

2.1 The company should issue safety instructions to all vessels under the management instructing all masters, officers and crew, and to remind all other personnel working on board ships, that for personal safety while climbing a long vertical ladder, everyone should be alert all the time to avoid falling from height.

2.2 The management company may consider fitting guard rings on long vertical access ladders fitted to ship cranes.