



香 港 商 船 資 訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

A fatal fall accident happened on board prior to closing the hatch cover of the cargo hold

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

Summary

A fatal fall accident happened when a Hong Kong registered ship berthed at Kwangyang, South Korea for discharging coal cargo. One Ordinary Seaman (OS) fell onto the bottom of the hold from the hatch coaming prior to closing the hatch cover of the cargo hold, resulting in his death. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers, and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. A Hong Kong registered general cargo ship berthed at Kwangyang, South Korea to discharge coal cargo. The duty officer instructed the duty Able Bodied Seaman (AB) and the OS to close the hatch cover of the No.1 cargo hold (the hold) after the discharge of cargo was completed. During the operation of the hatch cover (the hatch cover operation), the AB found the OS lying on the bottom of the hold. It was deduced that the OS fell onto the bottom of the hold from the hatch coaming while he was sweeping the slippery coal residue left on the hatch coaming alone. Although the OS was conveyed to a local hospital for emergency medical treatment, unfortunately he was later declared dead on the same day.

2. The investigation revealed that the main contributory factors causing the accident were: lack of safety awareness of the OS who underestimated the risk of falling from height while working on the hatch coaming; supervision of the hatch cover operation not meeting the requirements of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COP) and the shipboard Safety Management System (SMS); lack of effective communication among the team members of the hatch cover operation; and the ineffective shipboard training in the safe operation of work at height and the hatch cover operation.

Lessons Learnt

3. In order to avoid the recurrence of similar accidents during operation in the future, the ship management company, all masters, officers, and crew members should:

- (a) enhance safety awareness and safety culture on board to ensure the permit to work system is followed before working aloft;
- (b) strictly follow the requirements of the COP and SMS during the hatch cover operation;
- (c) enhance the communication among the crew during the key operations, especially when carrying out the hatch cover operation; and
- (d) enhance the shipboard safe operation training, such as work at height and the hatch cover operation and assess its effectiveness.

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

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9 March 2022