

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 38 OF 2013

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Safe Mid-stream Container Handling

A Chinese registered river trade vessel (RTV) was engaged in loading some empty containers at the berth of a container yard employing the derrick crane of a dumb steel lighter (DSL). A slingload of two empty containers was being loaded into the cargo hold of the RTV. To stop the spinning of the containers in suspension the derrick crane operator maneuvered the containers to rest against the port side bulkhead of the cargo hold.

2. Seeing this movement of the slingload a member of the crew assumed the containers were to be lowered to the empty space at the port fore corner of the cargo hold and started to climb down the cargo hold from the deck at the starboard fore corner of the coaming preparing to disengage the lifting hooks from the incoming containers. When the crew member was climbing down the cargo hold he had to turn his body around and could not see the subsequent movements of the slingload. Unfortunately at this moment, not realizing someone was climbing down the cargo hold, the derrick operator slewed the slingload towards the foremost starboard corner of the cargo hold where he intended to land the containers and it crushed the descending crew member between the containers and the cargo hold coaming. The crew member sustained serious injury and later died in hospital.

3. Investigation into the accident revealed that the causes of the accident were attributed to a lack of effective communication between the DSL crane operator and the RTV crew, poor safety awareness of the RTV crew, and the lack of co-ordination, supervision and proper work planning on the RTV.

4. To prevent recurrence of similar accidents, persons in charge of works and all persons engaged in mid-stream container handling, especially derrick crane operators, stevedores and crewmembers of coastal-going vessels are urged to observe the following safety precautions:

- No person should stay in the probable travelling path of a suspending cargo load to avoid injury caused by its unexpected movement. Always plan ahead for emergency evacuation and do not stay in a “dead spot”.

- Proper ladder or suitable safe means of access should be used when accessing to and from any work place such as a cargo hold.
 - It is advisable to assign a designated signaller to ensure the effective co-ordination and communication between the slingers attending the fall and the crane operator.
 - Effective communications between the crewmembers of the RTV and the DSL should be established before the commencement of cargo work. The cargo stowage plan of the RTV should be communicated; the code of signals and the sequence of loading/discharging containers should be agreed by both parties before cargo work begin.
 - The person in charge of works should exercise proper work planning and good co-ordination during progress of work by apportioning responsibilities and duties of each crewmember and assigning supervisory and managerial authorities.
 - The employer and person in charge of works have the responsibility to assess the training needs and to provide adequate training and guidance to consolidate the safety awareness of all crewmembers.
5. Further guidance on safe working practices for shipboard container handling is given in the Code of Practice on Shipboard Container Handling on Local Vessels issued by the Marine Department, and is available for download at the following website address: http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/miss_cop548.html.
6. This Notice supersedes Marine Department Notice No. 94 of 2012.

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Director of Marine

Marine Department
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