

Marine Department Notice No. 159 of 2013

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Safe Mid-stream Container Handling

A fatal accident occurred onboard a coastal vessel undertaking mid-stream container handling. A crewmember was fatally injured after falling down into a cargo hold of the vessel. In the accident, two empty containers stowed on the same row but separated by two other containers were discharged together in a single crane lift. The two containers were being lifted while a slinger was climbing down from one of the containers by stepping on the door hinges and appendages. The slinger lost his balance and fell down into the cargo hold. He was later certified dead in the hospital.

2. The investigation into the accident revealed that the crewmembers engaged in container handling work had failed to follow the safety practices stipulated in the “Code of Practice on Shipboard Container Handling on Local Vessels” (COP) published by the Marine Department. The accident could have been avoided if the following safe working practices were followed:-

- Daily safety briefings should be conducted to crewmembers engaged in container handling work before commencement of the operation.
- Effective communication between the crewmembers of the container vessel and the crane operator of the local crane barge should be maintained throughout the container handling operation.
- Persons employed should use a suitable means to gain access to or egress from the top of containers.
- Lifting and landing of multi containers in one single crane lift should be limited to not more than two empty containers stowed side by side on the same row and level. Lifting more than two empty containers in one single crane lift is prohibited.
- Persons employed in shipboard container handling should be given adequate breaks for rest, including, but not limited to those for meal, to reduce the risk of accident due to fatigue.

3. Owners, agents, masters or coxswains of local vessels, mainland coaster and river-trade vessels, stevedoring contractors, works supervisors, employers and persons in charge of shipboard container handling operations in the waters of Hong Kong, are reminded to observe and ensure that the above safe working practices and those stipulated in the COP are strictly followed.
4. The COP can be downloaded from the following Marine Department website:
http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/miss_cop548.html.
5. This Notice supersedes Marine Department Notice No. 144 of 2011.

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