

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 109 OF 2015

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Fatal accident of a sailor while working on container top

The Incident

During the voyage from Tsing Yi Island to Yaumatei Anchorage after loading containers at midnight, a crew member of a mainland registered river trade container vessel was found lying at the bottom of the cargo hold with a ladder pressing on his body. The victim was last seen walking on the top of the second tier containers alone to rig the container lashing. It was probable that the victim fell through the gap between the stacked containers and the cargo hold structure onto the bottom of the cargo hold when climbing the ladder to the 3rd tier of containers. He had been rescued and sent to hospital for treatment but was certified dead on the same day.

2. The investigation into the accident revealed the contributing factors as follows:

- a) the victim lacked of safety awareness as he had not assessed possible risks in the working environment before commencement of his work;
- b) the victim worked alone in the dark without supervision; and
- c) the ladder used by the victim for climbing was placed on an uneven surface of a container top.

Lesson Learnt

3. Whenever a crew member or other personnel on board ship is engaged in any work on the top of containers, the Code of Practice on Shipboard Container Handling issued by the Marine Department should be followed. The important lessons learnt from the above accident are:

- a) risks associated with the nature of work and the working environment should be carefully assessed and necessary precautions should be carried out to minimize the risks before commencement of the works;
- b) a crew member or other personnel on board a ship engaged in work on deck or other areas should be supervised by an experienced officer; and

- c) only portable ladder with anti-slip base should be used in climbing up or down containers or the ladder should be held or supported by an assistant.

4. The attention of the ship owners, masters, persons-in-charge of works, work supervisors, crew and other personnel on board ships is drawn to the important lessons learnt from the above accident.

H.M. TUNG
Director of Marine (Ag.)

Marine Department
Government of the HKSAR
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