

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 42 OF 2018

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Safe Handling of Container At Sea

The Incident

Last year, a fatal marine industrial accident occurred onboard a river trade vessel (RTV) at a cargo terminal within Hong Kong waters. The RTV moored alongside a dumb steel lighter (DSL) which was berthed at the cargo terminal. For unloading a container to the DSL, a crewmember of the RTV acting as a slinger would need to hook the wire slings from the DSL to the container. The accident happened when the slinger stood at the top of a container grabbing the descending wire slings from the DSL while the slings were still swinging in the air due to strong waves rocking the vessels. Subsequently, the slinger was carried away by the swinging slings and hit the containers nearby resulting in falling from height onto the bottom of the cargo hold. He was sent to hospital and certified dead.

2. Investigation into the accident revealed that:

- the slinger did not possess a valid certificate in respect of the relevant safety training course in accordance with section 54 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Works) Regulation; and
- the slinger grabbed the swinging slings which were still descending from height before resting on the container top.

3. To avoid the recurrence of similar accident, the attention of ship owners, masters and crewmembers of river trade vessels, crane and cargo operators, supervisors, persons in charge of works is drawn to the following important safety advice when handling cargo onboard:

- No cargo handling shall be carried out by a person unless that person holds a valid certificate in respect of the relevant safety training course or such other certificate relating to safety training recognized by the Director.

- Slings should always keep a safe distance from approaching slings until the slings have landed properly.

4. 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:

https://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/miss_548cop6.pdf.

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