

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 123/2023

(Marine Industrial Safety)

Fatal marine industrial accident during cargo operations

The Incident

A fatal marine industrial accident happened on board a China registered bulk carrier (*the vessel*) during cargo operations in the Pun Shan Shek Anchorage. Before the accident, a locally licensed dumb steel lighter (*the lighter*) was moored to the port side of *the vessel* and used its crane to lift the H-beams (*the cargo*) from *the vessel* onto *the lighter* (*the discharge operation*). During *the discharge operation*, the signaller noticed that a sling hook in the fore direction of the ship came loose and instructed the crane operator to lower the crane's boom to restart the hook-on operation. While the slinger approached the loosened sling hook, *the lighter* might have been swayed by the sea swell, causing the lifting chain connecting the boom and sling hook to rebound and hit the slinger, resulting in the slinger falling from the top of *the cargo* stack, at a height of about 7 to 9 metres, to the bottom of the hold. After the accident, the works supervisor immediately went to the scene and called the police for help. Afterwards, officers from the Police and the Fire Services Department arrived at the scene and provided first aid to the slinger before a rescue helicopter arrived and took the slinger to the hospital for medical treatment. Unfortunately, the slinger was confirmed dead on the same day.

2. The investigation revealed that the works supervisor failed to follow the requirement of the Shipping and Port Control (Works) Regulation (Cap. 313X of the Laws of Hong Kong) (*the Regulation*) to ensure the safety of the slinger during *the discharge operation*; the slinger failed to follow the requirement of the “Code of Practice – Using Protective Clothing and Equipment for Works on Vessels” (*the Code of Practice*) formulated by the Marine Department to wear a safety helmet during *the discharge operation*; the slinger also failed to follow

the requirement of *the Code of Practice* to wear a safety harness as far as reasonably practicable while working at height; and the crew members of *the vessel* failed to follow the requirement of the shipboard Safety Management System to supervise workers in *the discharge operation* carefully.

Lessons Learnt

3. To avoid the recurrence of similar incidents in future, ship management companies, shipmasters, persons in charge of works, works supervisors and cargo unloading operators should :

- (a) comply with the requirement of *the Regulation* that works supervisors shall ensure the safety of cargo unloading operators during cargo discharge operations;
- (b) comply with the requirements of the *Code of Practice* that cargo unloading operators shall wear appropriate protective helmets during cargo discharge operations and wear safety harnesses as far as reasonably practicable while working at height; and
- (c) comply with the requirement of the shipboard Safety Management System that on-duty shipboard personnel shall conscientiously supervise cargo discharge operations on board.

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