

OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENT

Very serious marine casualty: Loss of life of a crewmember after falling into the cargo hold.

What happened?

On a two-island container ship lying in ballast in the roadstead, a bosun was inspecting an empty hold when he fell eight meters from the enclosure of part of the engine room to the floor of the hold. He suffered life-threatening injuries as a result of the impact.

Despite the proximity to an international port, the crew had to conduct the ensuing emergency management largely without external support. In accordance with their good training and regular participation in refresher courses, the crew administered immediately first aid at the scene of the accident. Subsequently, the crew arranged for the transport from the scene of the accident to the ship's hospital under difficult circumstances and provided emergency medical care with the support of the telemedical maritime assistance service (TMAS).

The vertical transport of the bosun from the cargo hold to the hatch cover was difficult since the bosun slipped downward on the rescue stretcher, a spineboard.

Despite the shipboard medical aid, the bosun deceased soon after in the ship's hospital.

Why did it happen?

- The cause of the fall was that a non-illuminable cargo hold, which was closed at the time of the accident, was accessed. The access was not secured by a fixed or temporary system, albeit there was a risk of falling due to the ship's design.
- The bosun entered the cargo hold without a flashlight.
- The bosun slipped from the rescue stretcher, since no person could be safely transported with the attached instruction.

What can we learn?

- Cargo holds with engine room enclosures or tanks protruding into them which are accessible and not secured against fall can be generally found on container ships
- It must be ensured that all ship's operators and crews are aware of the possible dangers in order to take appropriate measures within the meaning of the ISM-Code and the occupational safety if required.
- No room with a risk of falling should be freely accessible.

- All access points to such areas must be marked with clear pictograms, e.g.:



- Reflective warning markings (e.g. yellow/black or red/white) should be taped to the floor at a reasonable distance to the edge of the fall.
- These rooms should be illuminable or – if required – only accessed with an adequate flashlight.
- In view of the limited availability of shore-based medical assistance for ship's crews, all crew members should regularly refresh their knowledge of medical first aid in accordance with their duties on board, e.g. during exercises on board and training on shore, and should always be familiar with the ship's hospital equipment and its handling.
- Crews should verify that the available rescue stretchers, in particular, could be used to transport a person vertically and that the associated instructions meet the requirements.
- If the rescue stretchers are not suitable, the ships commands should provide suitable rescue stretchers, if necessary, with the support of the ships operators. The bodies responsible for the suitability of medical equipment in the flag states should be involved in this process.

Who may benefit?

Ship owners, Port State Control inspectors, ship's operators, ship's commands.

¹ Source: Annex II No. 3.2. of Council Directive 92/58/EEC of 24 June 1992 on the minimum requirements for the provision of safety and/or health signs at work (Ninth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC (OJ L 245 p. 23); Celex No. 3 1992 L 0058. Last amended by Art. 1 Regulation (EU) 2019/1243 of 20.6.2019 (OJ L 198 p. 241).