

Investigation Report 181/04

1. June 2005

very serious marine casualty:

Fatal accident of diver on CMS CMA CGM VERLAINE, on 11 July 2004 in Marsaxlokk (Malta)

1 Summary of the marine casualty

During an intermediate survey to maintain the Building Safety Certificate a Dutch diver sustained fatal injuries on the German Container Vessel CMA CGM VERLAINE at 09.37 h local time on 11 June 2004 in the port of Marsaxlokk on Malta when he became caught in the area of the bow thruster while filming under water. The bow thruster was idling during the diving assignment, although it should have been out of operation. As a result of the suction, the diver became caught in the bow thruster tunnel and was struck by the adjustable propeller. It is possible that the diver's supply cable became wound round this too.

2 Safety Recommendations

The BSU recommends owners, operators and crews of vessels to which the International Safety Management Code (ISM Code) applies to ensure that important operational procedures on board are described adequately as regards safety of the vessel and that the tasks arising are concretely allocated to the relevant enabled staff. In all cases these include measures for plant and machine operation on the bridge and in the engine room that are necessary when changing over from sea to port operation or vice versa. The work on the vessel carried out by external firms with their additional safety requirements are to be realised efficiently as co-valid documents, i.e. the tasks resulting from these are to be allocated to staff members on board responsible from case to case.

The owner must observe his obligation of reporting structural changes in the authorised structural condition of the vessel to the supervisory institutions.

The manufacturers of bow thruster systems must ensure that the maintenance and operating instructions of the equipment they bring into circulation include the necessary detail and provide easily understandable information about starting up and switching off. This also includes clear indications of the automatic switching off, the fine adjustment and the unintentional and uncontrollable build-up of pitch of the adjustable propeller when idling and of special dangers and risks in the pressure-free condition and during maintenance work or underwater surveys of the system.