

Investigation Report 268/15

Date 1 March 2017

Very Serious marine casualty

Fatal accident on board the CMV DUBLIN EXPRESS on 14 July 2015 en route from Caucedo to Rotterdam

1 Summary

An occupational accident with fatal consequences occurred on the German-flagged full-container carrier DUBLIN EXPRESS while en route from Caucedo, Dominican Republic, to Rotterdam on 14 July 2015.

At about 1553, a Philippine welder fell from a ladder while carrying out repair works in the ship's engine room. The seaman had probably been standing at a height of about 1.40 metres on the platform of the aluminium stepladder, which was not very well secured due to the design, and is likely to have been inspecting the proper bolting of a pipe connection that ran above his head after pipe cleaning works. Precautions against falling from the ladder had neither been taken in terms of personnel (safety watch at the ladder) nor in respect of special personal protective equipment (a belt system, for example).

For reasons unexplained, the welder lost his grip (probably while working overhead), fell backwards to the ground, and started to bleed from the nose and mouth. The two other crew members involved in the maintenance works became aware of the accident, which they did not observe directly, from the sound of the fall and notified the ship's command immediately.

Any action necessary to help the severely injured and unconscious welder was taken on board immediately. The casualty was transported to the ship's medical centre and cared for using all means available on board. While the first aid was ongoing, the ship's command contacted the telemedical maritime assistance service MEDICO Cuxhaven.

The master immediately altered the course of the ship toward the nearest coastline (Puerto Rico), which was about 410 nautical miles away, and contacted the coast guard to request a rescue helicopter.

Despite the many activities on board, the condition of the seaman deteriorated dramatically during the hours that followed. Attempts at resuscitation were necessary shortly before 1900 ship's time. This was continued up until 2021 ship's time but then stopped in consultation with MEDICO Cuxhaven due to the apparent lack of success.

The DUBLIN EXPRESS then went back on her original course toward Rotterdam. After calling at Rotterdam, the ship arrived at the port of Hamburg on 24 July 2015, where the deceased seaman was taken off the ship and transferred to his home country after the autopsy.

2 Safety Recommendations

The following safety recommendations do not constitute a presumption of blame or liability in respect of type, number or sequence.

2.1 German Social Accident Insurance Institution for Commercial Transport, Postal Logistics and Telecommunication (BG Verkehr)

2.1.1 Revision of Handbuch See

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that BG Verkehr adapt section B 3.3 (Using ladders) of its publication Handbuch See to account for the requirements of the European DIN EN 131-3:2007 standard (Ladders – User instructions) and the BetrSichV, pointing to the need for a relevant risk assessment for working on ladders without holding on and recommending any ensuing additional safety precautions if necessary.

2.1.2 Information to the companies insured

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that BG Verkehr advise in an appropriate manner the German shipping companies it insures of the need for additional safety measures to be taken when working on ladders without holding on, extending previous recommendations.

2.2 German Social Accident Insurance (Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung e. V.– DGUV)

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that as the umbrella organisation of the institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention, the DGUV revise its publication DGUV Information 208-016 (directions for handling ladders and steps) and adapt it to account for the requirements of the European DIN EN 131-3:2007 standard (Ladders – User instructions) and the BetrSichV. As regards working on ladders without holding on, the ensuing obligation of preparing a risk assessment arising from the BetrSichV should be pointed to and – at least in certain cases – the need for additional safety measures should be included in the directions.

2.3 The owner, Hapag-Lloyd AG

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the owner, Hapag-Lloyd AG, supplement the ship safety manuals of the ships of its fleet in respect of using ladders or working at a height to the effect that special safety precautions are required not only from a height of more than two metres, but rather when working without holding on from a position from which a fall is possible.