



Risk Assessment Solutions

“Prevent, Don’t Cure”

Circular 03/03/15

Subject: Serious injuries due to fall from a height - Important Safety Issue!

Case: Recently, it has been reported that a seafarer died in South Korea from injuries he suffered as a result of falling from a height of 25 m from the vessel’s number eight cargo hold onto the tank top. At the time of his fall, the seafarer was a member of a crew team that were in the process of removing cargo residuals from the vessel’s cargo holds.

Safety factors related to this incident reported a failure to recognize faulty equipment at the accident site. At first the risks of the task were deemed to be well understood and as a result no formal risk assessment was carried out and no work permits were issued. A failure of the seafarer to use a harness or a ladder in order to save time resulted to his fatal fall.

Falls can occur anywhere on board the vessel, such as from a ladder, gangways, over the side and stairs in the machinery spaces or if slippery surfaces are added to the equation, together with the vessel’s motion, the possibility of an accident taking place becomes very high.

In connection to the above, and in order to assist our clients to prevent similar unpleasant cases or potential accidents/incidents related to falls from a height, we would like to point out the following:

- The primary control measure that should be implemented onboard is the Ship’s Management System (SMS) procedures i.e. permit to work process and seafarers training. These procedures should be a main priority at all times; ***but, it is reminded that, by just making reference to the aforementioned without cultivating a “Safety Culture”, none of these is a panacea that will in itself sort out the situation.***
- A risk assessment should be carried out by the senior seafarers when planning a work task depending on how dangerous the job required to be conducted onboard is;
- ***The ideal risk assessment should not only assess the risks involved in the task but also assess the skills and condition of the seafarer(s) (health etc.) before assigning duties/task.***
- A Permit to Work (PTW) Checklist for entry into enclosed spaces should indicate the need for safeguards to be implemented thus reducing any risk of falling;
- Procedures to be followed for hazard identification and implementation of safeguards to control risks is a serious issue and should not be considered as extra work load by the seafarers;
- Protective measures (e.g. guard rails, proper lighting, marking of trip hazards etc.) should be a matter of priority on board;
- Familiarization of the crew should take place with the layout of a tank or enclosed space before entry. A Risk Assessment can only be completed when the layout of the space is known.
- It is suggested that the crew members with the greater experience and skills should perform works at a height or below deck;
- ***The possibility of emergencies should also be considered when planning to perform work at a height;***
- Each crew member should at all times be in compliance with the regulations and policies applicable onboard the vessel;

Finally, due to the severity of the issue, “Prevention at Sea” would also like to comment that in order to prevent any unpleasant incident/accident, the safety procedures and the training of seafarers alone are not sufficient control measures to be implemented in managing such potential incidents at sea.



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The cultivation of a **Safety Culture** is of a paramount importance onboard providing a complete overview of all aspects that should be considered when assessing the risks associated with working at a height.

The diagram below summarizes all factors to be thoroughly considered before a work at a height is scheduled:

Safety Culture



[Source: Maritime Safety Awareness, Issue 1 Bulletin]

To assist further, the **“Prevention at Sea” Training Academy** is offering our clients the training course titled **“Health, Hygiene & Safety on board. The Safety Culture”**, which deals with health and hygiene procedures and developing a safety culture to be implemented within the Company and onboard the vessels. The main aim of the course is to teach attendees ways to maintain hygiene standards on board through implementing various procedures and also to be able to identify and report near misses by strengthening their notion of the **‘Don’t Cure, Prevent’** policy.

We remain at your disposal for more details,

Prevention at Sea