

Injury – men overboard during lifeboat drill

The Master wanted to complete a lifeboat drill since the vessel had been in dry dock and lots of the crew had been replaced. It was decided to start the drill at 15.30. It was a sunny day and the vessel was at anchor, there was a slight swell but the Master didn't really think it was of any concern. The vessel had left dry dock late the previous evening and was at anchor in a bay close by.

Some of the new crew had joined the vessel the previous day. The new crew included a couple of ratings, a newly promoted 2nd Officer and a Cook who had never been at sea before. One of the duties of the 2nd Officer was to act as safety officer. The Chief Officer had planned to train the 2nd Officer about his safety officer duties during the following sea passage.

While at dry dock an external company had carried out the 5-year replacement of all wires for all lifeboats and the fast rescue boat. They also completed the annual inspection of the hydrostatic unit, dynamic test of the winch break and the on-load test, which is also mandatory for replacement every 5 years. The crew had also carried out some maintenance on the lifeboats and replaced some old ropes and other equipment. After all maintenance and tests were complete the Chief Officer inspected the lifeboats. He found that the bowse tackle ropes were too large to be held on the bitts. He wrote this down and told the bosun to fix this when he had time.

The drill commenced at 15.30 and one of the lifeboats was lowered, starboard side, and held alongside the embarkation deck. The lifeboat's bowing tackles were rigged. The crew boarded the lifeboat. The duty of the Cook, who was one of the crew in the lifeboat, was to be forward and release the hook when the lifeboat touched the water. This was only his second day onboard and



he had not received any training about his safety duties, but the Chief Officer planned to guide him through the drill.

The Chief Officer ordered the tricing pennants to be released. This was not a problem for the engineer on the stern of the lifeboat. The Cook did not really understand what he was required to do and could not release the pin securing the tricing pennant hook release lever. The 2nd Officer, who was in charge of the lifeboat, left the steering wheel and crawled on the roof to assist the cook who was also on the roof, neither were wearing safety harnesses, but were wearing life jackets. The 2nd officer had not zipped up his life-jacket as it was a little tight.

The 2nd Officer finally managed to remove the pin but at the same time the cook moved, causing the forward bowing rope to come free. The lifeboat swung violently causing the 2nd Officer and Cook to lose balance and fall overboard into the water, which was 15m below them. The Cook signalled from the water that he was ok but the 2nd Officer could not be seen, with only his life jacket visible floating on the surface.



Discussion

Go to the "File" menu and select "Save as..." to save the pdf-file on your computer. You can place the marker below each question to write the answer directly into the file.



1. What were the immediate causes of this accident?

2. Is there a chain of error?

3. Is there a risk that this kind of accident could happen on our vessel?

4. How could this accident have been prevented?

5. What sections of our SMS would have been breached if any?

6. Is our SMS sufficient to prevent this kind of accident?

7. If procedures were breached, why do you think this was the case?

8. Should you board the lifeboat in the stowed position or at deck level?

9. The risk of serious injuries increase substantially with the height from where a lifeboat is launched. What is the height for our survival crafts?

10. Is this height a concern?

11. During drills should the crew board at the embarkation deck or when the boat is in the water?

12. Are you aware of the winch motor's capacity and the required diameter for the wire?

13. Do we correct an identified issue with any safety equipment straight away?

14. What are our procedures for training new crew members?

15. Would the Cook have been placed in the lifeboat if we had a drill?

16. If someone is not wearing his required safety equipment or wears it incorrectly, do we tell that crew member?

17. What do you think is the root cause of this accident?

18. Do we have a risk assessment onboard that addresses these risks