

Rescue boat drill ended with injuries

The vessel was in port and the Master wanted to do a rescue boat drill as no drill had been completed since the vessel was delivered about a month earlier. It was a nice day with favourable weather and the harbour authority had given the vessel clearance to launch and manoeuvre the rescue boat in the harbour.

The people assigned to the rescue boat in an emergency were the chief officer, bosun, oiler and third engineer. The chief officer was in charge of organising the drill. He had joined the vessel in the shipyard about two months before delivery. During that time he had watched the shipyard complete a rescue boat drill but had not been involved himself.

Before the drill commenced the chief officer had a short briefing with all available crew and the master. After the briefing the crew, which were assigned to the rescue boat, embarked. The Master informed the rescue boat crew that the safety pin should be removed before the rescue boat was waterborne. He did not state at what precise height the pin should be removed but assumed the crew would remove it just before the boat was waterborne.

The chief officer pulled the slewing wire until the boat was positioned so it could be lowered. He then pulled the lowering wire until the boat was three meters above the surface, where he removed the safety pin. At the same time the slewing wire, which was hanging free, somehow got caught in the release lever for the hook and caused the boat to drop into the water.

The boat was quickly retrieved, and the injured crew received medical attention. The four crew members were not severely injured. Two crew members had to be admitted to hospital. This was a fortunate outcome as there could have been fatal consequences or really serious injuries.

A port state inspector boarded the vessel to investigate the incident, he raised a couple of deficiencies and was concerned that the safety pin had been removed too early.



- Operating instructions for the rescue boat on load release hook and safety locking pin, not included in SOLAS training manual.
- Operating instructions for control/handling of remote-control wires for slewing of davit and lowering of rescue boat, not included in SOLAS training manual.
- Flag state and Class should be informed about incident. Which they were not.
- Rescue boat launching instructions and rescue boat training to be reviewed.

The company had no specific instructions in the training manual, SMS, PMS or in any other manual on how the rescue boat should be launched.

In SOLAS chapter III regulation 35.3 there is a requirement for detailed instructions in the training manual on how the rescue boat should be launched. Also, in SOLAS chapter III reg 3.3.6 there is a requirement that the rescue boat should be launched every month or a minimum of every three months.

It is imperative to ensure that no wires or ropes get caught in any equipment when the rescue boat is being lowered. The company should ensure that the crew are aware of this risk and implement procedures to prevent this.

It is essential that all officers know how to launch and manoeuvre the rescue boat and not just the designated officer for an emergency. In this case the designated officer lacked proper knowledge. The company should ensure that all officers know how to launch the rescue boat.

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.



When discussing this case please consider that the actions taken at the time made sense for all involved. Do not only judge but also ask why you think these actions were taken and could this happen on your vessel?

1. What were the immediate causes of this accident?

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

3. How could this accident have been prevented?

4. Do we have a risk assessment for launching of the rescue boat?

5. If we do, could this risk assessment be improved?

6. Do we have operating instructions for the rescue boat on load release hook, lowering the boat and the safety locking pin?

7. Do all officers know how to operate and lower the rescue boat?

8. Is there any kind of training that we should do that addresses these issues?

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

10. Does our SMS address these risks?

11. How could we improve our SMS to address these issues?

12. What do you think was the root cause of this accident?