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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Fatal man overboard accident happened when working over ship side

To : *Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Crew*

Summary

An able-bodied seaman on board a Hong Kong registered ship fell overboard and could not be found when he was painting ship side draught marks in anchorage. This Information Note draws the attention of the shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew to the lessons learnt from the accident.

The Incident

1. When a Hong Kong registered bulk carrier was in anchorage waiting for berthing, an able-bodied seaman (the AB) without wearing a life jacket was lowered down over the ship side on a bosun chair, to paint the amidships's draught marks. After the painting work was completed, whilst the AB was being lifted up by the crew members, the lifting rope suddenly parted. The AB fell into the water and his lifeline was detached from the ship side railing during his fall. Soon afterwards, the AB was drown and disappeared in the water.
2. The vessel's rescue boat was launched into the water for search and rescue, but the boat engine failed to run. The AB could not be found regardless of extensive air, sea and underwater search.
3. Investigation into the accident revealed the following contributing factors:
 - a) a badly deteriorated lifting rope parted whilst it was used for lifting the bosun chair whereon the AB was seated;
 - b) lack of safety awareness of crew members on board was manifested by:
 - i) the established safety procedures were not followed to ensure the donning of life jacket when working over the ship side;

- ii) the crew members did not properly secure the lifeline that attached the AB to the ship side railing and as a result the AB fell into the water and disappeared; and
- c) the work supervision was not sufficient .

Lessons learnt

4. It is important that crew members should strictly follow the shipboard safety procedures and code of safety working practice, in the following ways:

- a) crew members should ensure that their personal protective equipment and lifting gears are in good condition before using the equipment and gears (e.g. the lifeline should be always secured firmly to the ship's structure);
- b) it is also important for the master to confirm that the crew who are responsible to operate any life-saving equipment on board, are familiar with the functioning and operation procedures of such equipment through regular drills. (e.g. rescue boat engine should be always ready for immediate use);
- c) where work over ship side is being carried out, a lifejacket, a personal floatation device or a buoyancy aid should be worn; and
- d) a thorough on-board supervision and monitoring of the work over ship side by a safety officer is very important.

5. The attention of the shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew is drawn on the lessons learnt above.

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