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Shipping Notice - CISN 02/03

Lifeboat Accidents

*To: OWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS, OFFICERS, SEAFARERS AND SURVEYORS
USING DAVIT LAUNCHED LIFEBOATS*

1. Background

The UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) recently published a study of accidents relating to lifeboat use¹.

The findings of this study, and a number of concerns expressed by CISR Surveyors have prompted the CISR to issue this notice to emphasise to lifeboat users that maintenance, preparation, embarkation, lowering and recovery operations are potentially dangerous.

This notice should be copied to all Masters, officers and seafarers and discussed during safety meetings. Such discussion should be documented in the minutes of the safety meetings. This notice should be read in conjunction with CISN 02/95, On-Load Lifeboat Release Mechanisms.

2. Dangers

The MAIB survey² showed that 16% of all seafarers killed were as a result of lifeboats and their launching appliances. 87 seafarers were injured and there were numerous "near misses".

MAIB findings indicate that seafarers are exposed to the greatest risk of injury during the maintenance, launching and recovery operations of lifeboats.

The study also shows that no seafarer (or passenger) has lost his life whilst using a lifeboat for its intended purpose. Common problems are detailed in Annex 1.

¹ MAIB Safety Study 1/2001, Review of Lifeboat and Launching Systems' Accidents.

² Compiled over 10 years, both on UK flag ships and on non-UK flag ships where the MAIB conducted investigations on behalf of non-UK Flag States.

3. MAIB Conclusions

In its conclusion, MAIB points out that, whilst its review had identified a number of hazards involved in lifeboat operations, the data used was limited to UK accident records only. The MAIB recommends the IMO to undertake a wider study to include worldwide accident data.

4. CISR Recommendation

Based on the findings of the MAIB survey and past experience, it is strongly recommended that in the case of drills, training and maintenance involving davit launched lifeboats:

- All lifeboat operations should be carried out under the supervision of an experienced senior officer.
- Lifeboats should be lowered to the embarkation position and held alongside the ship by the proper use of bowsing tackles.
- Bowsing tackles should be rigged so that the tackle can be paid out from the ship, not from within the lifeboat. (Caution: This procedure is recommended only when carrying out drills, training and maintenance. In the case of abandoning ship the bowsing tackle should be rigged and eased from within the boat.)
- Nobody should be in the lifeboat during lowering or hoisting back to the stowed position.
- Proper and thorough training should be given, manuals and instructions reviewed, and proper supervision be exercised on any non-emergency activity involving lifeboats.

Additionally, it is recommended that a copy of the above MAIB survey review should be made available to each ship for the benefit of the crew. The CISR can assist in obtaining these upon request.

ANNEX 1

Lifeboat Accidents

Common Problems

On-load Release Hooks - This is the most common cause of accidents:

- Poor understanding.
- Inadequate training.
- Poor maintenance.

Bowsing and Tricing – The second most common cause of accidents:

- Poor understanding of the use of both items of equipment.
- Inadequate training.
- Failing to rig bowsing tackles.
- Releasing Senhouse slips without the lifeboat properly bowsed in.
- Overpaying the falls so that they are slack and the tricing pennant fails or is released with slack falls, causing sudden movement of the lifeboat.

Falls, Sheaves and Blocks

- Failure of suspension links or chains.

Engine Starting – the cause of many injuries:

- Inadequate training.

Gripes – The cause of many injuries to fingers and hands:

- Inadequate training and supervision.

Winches – The cause of many mechanical failures:

- Inadequate maintenance.
- Inadequate training and supervision.