

URGENT SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

FLYER TO THE YACHTING INDUSTRY (01/2026)

Fatal Accident During Tender Launching Operations

What Happened?

On board a private sailing yacht greater than 500GT, during routine operations to launch the vessel's tender, a crew member was fatally injured when the crane boom suddenly collapsed during lifting. The tender was being lifted from its stowage well using a centreline boom crane of SWL 2.5 Tonnes. Three crew members were involved in the operation: one operating the crane by remote control, one guiding the bow of the tender, and one steadying the stern. As the tender was swung outboard and positioned for lowering to the water, the crew member at the stern moved to the vessel's side rail to control the tender. At this point he was standing directly beneath the crane boom.

Without warning, the mast-mounted topping lift sheave block supporting the crane boom failed, allowing the boom and the suspended tender to fall suddenly. The boom struck the crew member, causing fatal injuries.

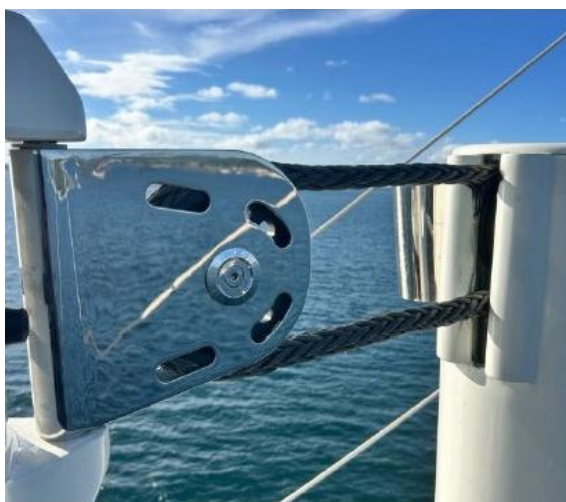


Fig.1 Topping lift sheave block



Fig. 2 Sheave roller

What Did The Investigation Find?

The investigation identified several contributing factors. The crane boom was supported by running rigging incorporating a sheave block mounted high on the mast. Whilst annual thorough examination had been conducted in this case, its location made regular close visual inspection difficult.

The investigation found that the retaining axle pin securing the sheave bearing sleeve had loosened and detached, allowing lateral movement of the sheave between the cheek plates and ultimately may have allowed the sheave to be pulled out under load. The subsequent side-loading caused wear within the sheave assembly that would likely have been difficult to detect without disassembly. The sheave block design did not incorporate a bridging plate to prevent distortion of the cheek plates.

The crew member steadying the stern of the tender was positioned beneath the crane boom when the failure occurred. While the risk assessment for launching the tender identified the hazard of the boom falling and stated that crew should not stand underneath the boom, the deceased crew member was momentarily beneath the crane boom when the failure occurred.

Key Safety Lessons

1. Design vulnerabilities:

Owners, operators and crane manufacturers are requested to urgently investigate whether their lifting appliances are vulnerable to similar modes of failure and ensure the following:

- That sheave blocks are correctly marked with their Safe Working Load and that all such blocks are correctly rated
- Sheave blocks should be provided with adequate mechanical fastenings (such as an axle pin with a nyloc nut), and wherever possible, not rely on thread locking compound to mitigate the risk of working loose
- Where thread locking compounds are used, these should be appropriate for the intended application, considering in-service conditions and accessibility for inspection, and applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Consideration shall be given to the incorporation of bridging plates or equivalent reinforcement to prevent distortion of the cheek plates (see fig.3)

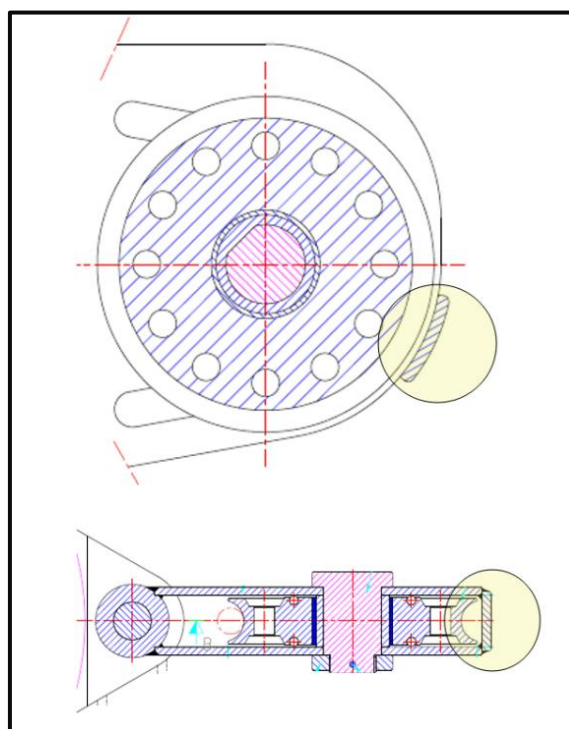


Fig.3 Example sheave bridging plate

- Lifting components are assessed for side loading and wear
- Where necessary, modifications or upgrades should be considered to improve the integrity of existing installations. (Modifications shall be carried out by the manufacturer under close supervision of the vessel's Recognised Organisation and may necessitate re-appraisal and retesting of the appliance in accordance with the applicable regulations)

2. Inspection and Maintenance:

Critical lifting components must be accessible for inspection. Where equipment is installed in elevated or enclosed positions safe access arrangements should be provided.

Inspection regimes, which shall be documented in on board planned maintenance systems, should include close-up examinations. Where defects cannot be detected visually, periodic dismantling and inspection may be required in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Maintenance procedures should identify critical components requiring regular examination including securing bolts and pins. The use of 'witness marks' on securing and locking nuts may prove essential with this monitoring process.

Designers and operators should consider access arrangements for inspection during the design, installation or modification of lifting appliances.

All vessels must keep records of manufacture, examination, inspection and testing of lifting equipment. In addition, the service history of the equipment, dates of when and where it is brought into use, its Safe Working Load (SWL), plus any repairs, modifications, tests and examinations carried out. A template 'Lifting Register' where this information shall be recorded, is provided in Annex 19.2 to the Code of Safe Working Practices (COSWP).

Lifting appliances and their loose gear shall be clearly and legibly marked with a SWL as well as any operational restrictions in accordance with Annex 19.4 to COSWP.

3. Safe Operation:

Standing beneath a suspended load or lifting appliance exposes personnel to severe risk if equipment fails. Crew involved in lifting operations should:

- Be trained by a competent person,
- Avoid positioning themselves beneath booms, hooks, blocks, or suspended loads,
- Use tag lines or alternative control methods to guide suspended loads,
- Maintain safe stand-off positions and establish exclusion zones where necessary,
- Ensure the inherent risks in all lifting operations, including the launching of watercraft, be rigorously assessed and safe working practices developed. These risk assessments and SOPs shall be understood by the crew, and subject to regular review.

- Ensure that specific lifting operations are first planned and discussed during ‘toolbox talks’ or pre-task briefings. Particular attention should be paid to tasks that are performed frequently, as routine operations can lead to complacency.

Further Guidance can be found in the [Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers 2025 Edition](#) (COSWP), Chapter 19 and [CIGN 07/2025 MSC 107](#).

Any questions or queries may be sent to technical@cishipping.com