

FLYER TO THE YACHTING INDUSTRY (06/2023)

The Dangers of “Tombstoning¹” from Yachts

A fatal accident was reported to the Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI) where a seafarer was killed as a result of jumping from the bridge wing of a large yacht into the water. Such activities are often referred to as “Tombstoning” and are extremely dangerous.

Accident details:

A large pleasure yacht was at anchor during a period of “down time” following an intensive guest trip over the previous 24 days. The plan was to let the entire crew enjoy a recreational period of swimming and water sports activities.

Shortly after a safety boat was launched, a number of crew members entered the water at the swim platform. Two crew members went to the port bridge wing with the intention of jumping into the water from a height of approximately 17m (55 feet).

When the safety boat was repositioned nearby, the first crew member jumped, entered the water and resurfaced without incident.

When it was time for the second crew member to jump, the crew member turned around and jumped backwards while attempting a “back flip” before entering the water. The crew member was described as entering the water “badly” and was unresponsive on returning to the surface.

The crew member was quickly recovered to the main yacht and the yacht medical team administered first aid and started CPR. The medical team was led by a qualified nurse. The crew member was transferred to shore in the yacht’s tender while first aid and CPR continued. Care was passed to waiting paramedics and ambulance crew. At no time did the crew member regain consciousness or show other signs of life. One hour eighteen minutes had elapsed between the crew member jumping and care being passed to the ambulance crew.

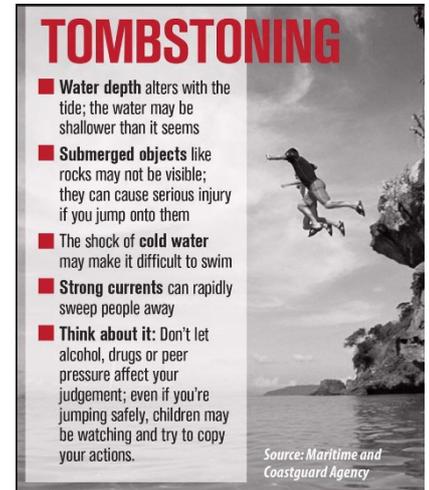
The crew member was declared deceased on arrival at hospital.

Safety lessons and observations:

The master’s decision to allow the crew leisure time for swimming and water sports activities at anchor was laudable and such actions are to be encouraged.

“Leisure activities” can pose hazards commensurate with the hazards associated with work activities. As such, the risks associated with a leisure activity should be known and mitigated wherever possible.

The master and three senior officers were present on the bridge wing when both crew members jumped into the water.



¹ “tombstoning” – *The dangerous activity of jumping from very high rocks or structures into water while keeping the body straight.* (Cambridge Dictionary)

Water sports activities, such as the use of jet skis or efoils should only be undertaken after appropriate training and under supervision.

Jumping into water from great height, or “tombstoning”, is inherently dangerous and serious or even fatal injuries can occur on entering the water.

For more information on the dangers associated with “tombstoning” in general visit the RoSPA² website [HERE](#)³.

*Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands
10 October 2023.*

² The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (www.rosipa.com)

³ <https://www.rosipa.com/leisure-water-safety/water/advice/tombstoning>