

Marine Safety Flash

A16-34 (14th September)

Man overboard incident during swing rope transfer

Incident Overview

A recent High Potential Incident where an offshore crew fell overboard during swing rope transfer from a platform boat landing to the deck of a crew boat.

The MOB incident occurred during period of darkness in moderate sea states. A crew boat had positioned itself at the boat landing of an offshore platform and 5 Offshore crew members were in the process of transferring across from the boat landing to crew boat stern deck. Two marine crew members were in attendance at the stern of the crew boat to provide assistance as per normal procedure. Three of the offshore crew had made the transfer safely and the fourth was in the process of swinging over to the deck.

Due to a combination of improper swinging technique and sudden heave movement on the boat, the crew member only partially landed on the landing stage on the crew boat. He released his grip on the swing rope prematurely and fell into the water before the marine crew in attendance could get a hold of him. (Refer to pictures further below which illustrate the position of the IP just prior to falling overboard.

Whilst floating in the water, the offshore crew struck his head and hands against the barnacle/sea growth on the boat landing. The IP (Injured Person) suffered abrasions to his hands and a cut to his head, the latter injury subsequently required stitches. The IP eventually managed to board the platform safely via the sea ladder before being evacuated by crew boat.

Key Findings

1. Marine crew on standby at the boarding stage on the stern deck of crew boats must provide guidance to passengers on the movement on the vessel and actively support to pull passengers across to the landing stage. This provides positive and active intervention.
2. Night time swing rope transfer operations pose a higher risk due to greater difficulty in judging vessel movement and recovery of persons from the water. Deck crew must deploy rescue equipment rapidly and to maintain visual surveillance of person(s) in the water. Deck search and flood lights must be directed to locate the person(s) in the water and to guide the Master to position the vessel in a safe but proximate location to expedite recovery.
3. Shipboard team must be familiar with the vessel specific procedure for the recovery of persons from the water and use of all related rescue equipment including deployment of scrambling nets and ability to manually recover persons who may be unconscious in the water. Drills must be conducted under realistic conditions including conducting these drills in night time conditions. Record of these MOB drills must be maintained for audit purposes.
4. Constant visual contact must be maintained with personnel who may have fallen into the water until recovery is completed. This is particularly critical during night time MOB situations

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CCTV Footage showing the IP at the point of letting go grip on the swing rope and just prior falling into the water.



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The difference in heights between the platform boat landings and crew boat decks can be between 0.5 to 1m under static conditions. This height can increase to as much as 1.5-2m in a dynamic environment. Vessel crew must ensure that passengers are using the swing ropes to effectively swing across and be ready to pull passengers across so that they land safely on the boarding area on the stern.



Adequate deck lighting is critical for any night time crew transfer operations. Deck Floodlights and stern deck search lights must be available to provide the required levels of lighting. In event of a MOB situation in darkness, the shipboard team must use the stern search light and/or flood lights to be directed towards the person in the water and visual surveillance maintained at all times by the deck team.

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Typical arrangement for Scrambling net at the Rescue Zone on Crew Boats



Crew Boats must have in place vessel specific detailed procedures for the recovery of persons from the water. Shipboard team must be fully familiar with the use of all related MOB Rescue equipment on crew boats including scrambling nets and lifebuoys with safety lines.

MOB exercises must be conducted as per vessels' Drill Matrix and all opportunity must be taken to conduct such drills during periods of darkness as far as practicable. This will test the readiness and capability of the shipboard team to recover persons from the water.

Recommendations

1. Vessel Operators to verify the adequacy of current vessel specific procedures for the recovery of persons from the water as per requirements of [MSC.1/Circ.1447](#) – Guidelines for the Development of Plans and Procedures for Recovery of Persons. In particular, details of methods of recovery relevant to the equipment carried on board must be clearly stated. These recovery measures must include details of recovering persons unconscious in the water.
2. Vessel Operators to put in place requirement to carry out MOB drills under realistic conditions including but not limited to conducting these drills during periods of darkness as far as it is practicable and reasonably safe to do so.
3. Provide shipboard training to reinforce the roles and responsibilities of the vessel crew stationed at the landing stage. This should include but not limited to crew providing advice on the movement of the vessel and supporting passengers to physically assist them across to the deck of the vessel. Record of completion of this refresher training to be submitted.