

Case study: crew injury - cargo lift overload

The Incident

To facilitate the carrying out of emergency drills and crew training, a fishing vessel suspended its operations and buoyed off its hauling line. During this time, four crew members were working in the freezer hold, stowing frozen offal blocks.

On hearing the emergency alarm to initiate the drill, the assistant factory manager, supervising from the factory deck above, assembled the four crew members into the cargo lift (which was already laden with 15 frozen offal blocks) and proceeded to hoist them up to the main deck to participate in the drills. When the lift had been hoisted to a height of about 1.5m above the tank top, the hoisting wire parted, causing the lift to plummet into the cargo hold. Two crew members successfully jumped clear of the lift, back into the freezer hold, however the other two crew members suffered from severe shock and broken ankles.

Observations

Following the load testing of the cargo lift, it was established that the load should not exceed 200kg. This was conveyed at the tool box meeting held prior to the operation. In this instance, the total weight of people plus offal blocks being moved was 275kg, exceeding the maximum load limit. This overloading inadvertently resulted in damage to the load bearing block and the breaking of the crane wire cable, thereby causing the cargo lift to drop.

Preventative Action

The following actions should be implemented to prevent further incidents:

- Review risk assessment procedures to ensure the effectiveness of tool box meetings. Risks and control measures must be discussed and understood by all, particularly by those supervising the operations.
- Clear and prominent signage should be displayed in the vicinity of the cargo lift, warning personnel of the established load limits.
- Overload indicators and alarms/ cut-off switches to be fitted on critical lifting equipment.

Financial Cost

The continual, diligent monitoring by our Claims department throughout this case, including timely access to quality medical treatment for the injured crew members, prevented the claim

from escalating. The cost of this claim was capped at US\$ 41,719.