

## MEMBER ALERT

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**MARCH 15, 2004**

### **USCG SAFETY ALERT: LIFEBOAT GRIPES**

#### **Introduction**

The incidence of personal injuries as a result of lifeboat drills continues to be a concern for shipowners and Clubs alike. On March 11, the USCG issued the following safety alert on lifeboat gripes. For more information on how to acquire USCG Safety Alerts, please enquire with the USCG contacts mentioned at the end of the Safety Alert.

#### **Lifeboat Gripes**

The U.S. Coast Guard has recently been notified by a tank ship operator of a problem discovered during lifeboat launching drills. Although this event did not result in injury or death, there have been a number of lifeboat launching casualties that have. Readers should note that other manufacturers' boats and launching arrangements need to be examined for similar possibilities of entanglement and snag hazards.

It is reported that on several occasions during lowering of a 6.7 meter totally enclosed lifeboat, the ring on the released end of the aft gripe snagged the boat's "gripe bollard." The "gripe bollard" may be known as a "stern post" or "lashing chock."



The purpose of the gripes is to secure the lifeboat against the davits when in the stowed position. The gripes are essentially straps which attach to the ends of the boat and are secured to the davits. One end attaches to a tightening and turnbuckle device, while the other end is attached to a ring that is placed over a slip hook. When the lifeboat is brought to its stowed position, the free end of the gripe is payed over the gripe bollards on both ends of the vessel and the rings are placed over the slip hooks. The slip hooks are then shifted to their closed position.

When the need to abandon ship occurs, the lifeboat is boarded, crewmembers are strapped in their harnesses and its lowering is initiated by a coxswain from inside the boat. A single lever releases the gripes by causing the slip hook to rotate allowing the rings at the terminal ends of the gripes to fall off. Simultaneously the brake is released and the boat begins to lower. As the boat lowers, the gripes travel on the bollard.

Because the ring at the free end of the gripe is larger than the circular outer edge of the bollard, the ring can catch the bollard. Level lowering will continue until the gripe takes the load at which point the end of the vessel which hasn't snagged will continue to lower. The gripe may or may not break when the lifeboat begins to hang.

**This condition is unacceptable** and may contribute to the loss of life during emergency evacuations or drills.

The Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that owners and operators of vessels having any type of webbing or wire cable used in a griping/securing system:

- contact the respective lifeboat manufacturers and class society representatives to find out what type of gripe entanglement incidents have been reported, and
- develop appropriate solutions that will minimize potential risks associated with such designs.



The IMO Ship Design and Equipment Sub-Committee has recently developed a draft MSC Circular related to this subject, which should be approved and published soon. Included in the draft circular entitled "Guidance on Safety During Abandon Ship Drills Using Lifeboats" is the recommendation -- "To prevent lashings or gripes from getting entangled, check proper release before swinging out the davit." The Sub-Committee continues to work on long-range solutions.

This material is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any existing domestic or international safety, operational or material requirement. Specific questions regarding this safety alert may be addressed Mr. Ken Olsen of the Office of Investigations and Analysis at [kolsen@comdt.uscg.mil](mailto:kolsen@comdt.uscg.mil) or 202.267.1417. Technical questions regarding other lifeboats and emergency equipment or to report similar occurrences may be addressed to LT Todd Howard of the Coast Guard's Life Saving and Fire Safety Division at [thoward@comdt.uscg.mil](mailto:thoward@comdt.uscg.mil) or 202.267.6854.

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