



GOOD CATCH from The American Club

Safety Harness and the Young Mariner

Description

A Panamax bulk carrier vessel was underway in ballast and was preparing to pick up the pilot. The time was 01:30 on an especially dark and moonless night. The air was cool and the water temperature was 52° F (11° C). The winds were gusting to 30 knots and the seas were rough.

The vessel's Chief Officer, Bosun, one Able Seafarer (AB) and two Ordinary Seafarers (OSs) were preparing to rig the pilot ladder. Since the vessel had a freeboard in excess of 30 feet (9 meters), they were also preparing to rig the accommodation ladder. Prior to starting the work, the Chief Officer led the required safety briefing for the rigging team. The team consisted of experienced mariners except for one young OS who had reported to the vessel only a few weeks prior. The Chief Officer quickly went through the safety briefing since he had briefed and worked with the other team members on the same operation many times before. He told the young OS to pay particularly close attention and do exactly what he's told.

Since it was dark, the crew had rigged a spotlight shining over the side. The pilot ladder was lowered first, then the accommodation ladder was swung out and lowered. As the Bosun was getting ready to go down the accommodation ladder to separately secure the pilot ladder and the accommodation ladder to the side of the vessel, the young OS asked whether the Bosun should be wearing a safety harness and life jacket like they taught him in his training before reporting to the vessel. The AB stated that they do this all the time without them. But the Bosun hesitated and thereafter sent the young OS to bring him a harness and a life jacket.

After donning the harness and life jacket, the Bosun went down the accommodation ladder while the others finished their work on deck. Soon thereafter, they heard a scream, looked over the side and saw the Bosun hanging by the safety harness. He had apparently slipped off the lower platform on the accommodation ladder while securing it to the side of the vessel. They were able to haul the Bosun back up to the lower platform where he finished his work.



Actual Injuries and Damage

The Bosun suffered only minor bruises from where the safety harness rubbed against his thighs and shoulders that led to no lost work time resulting from his injuries.

Potential Damages

Had the Bosun not been wearing the safety harness and life jacket, he would have fallen into the sea. The darkness, the weather, the sea conditions and water temperature would have made his survivability very unlikely.

Prevention

- ★ Safety equipment should always be worn as required and when operating conditions increase the risk of an incident.
- ★ Evaluate the risks every time the pilot ladder is lowered and every time the accommodation ladder is lowered. Circumstances are likely different each time, so the risks may be different as well.
- ★ Don't rush through the safety briefing just to say that it was done. To be effective, the specific risks and mitigation measures including personal protective equipment, safety gear, and established procedures must be identified for the specific task at the specific time in those specific conditions.

When you identify a hazard before something goes wrong...

it's a Good Catch.

When you stop an operation before something bad happens...

it's a Good Catch.

When you recognize that safety equipment should be used and say something...

that's a Good Catch, too!



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