



Steep Accommodation Ladder

Description

A tank vessel was moored at a terminal. All cargo had been offloaded and the vessel had very little ballast onboard. Consequently, the freeboard was large, putting the accommodation ladder at a steep angle. The accommodation ladder was in very good condition and was properly secured to the vessel. Further, a safety net was rigged as required.

One of the oilers was departing the vessel after completing his 8-month long contract. It had taken him longer than he expected to get cleaned up, gather the necessary paperwork, and get packed. The vessel's agent had made arrangements for transportation to take him to the airport and the driver was getting impatient. The oiler had hurried along the main deck to the top of the gangway with his heavy backpack and carrying his suitcase. As he was about halfway down the accommodation ladder, his suitcase banged against one of the stanchions and tripped him. He lost his balance, fell hard, and tumbled down the accommodation ladder before coming to a halt near the bottom.

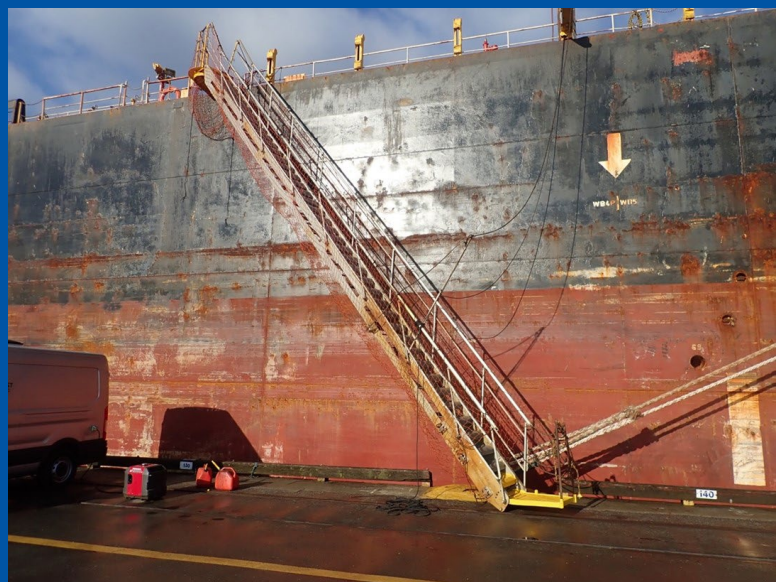
He required emergency medical treatment and spent 2 days in the hospital before he was able to fly home.

The accommodation ladder angle of inclination was later measured at a 60° angle. The manufacturer of the accommodation ladder indicated that the maximum angle of inclination should be 55° and a label on the side of the accommodation ladder also indicated that maximum angle.

The mate on watch later said that he was aware that the accommodation ladder was steep and had been up and down it himself to read the draft marks. However, he was not aware there was a maximum angle.

The mariner on watch at the top of the accommodation ladder indicated that he offered to call the bosun to operate the deck crane to lower the oiler's luggage to the dock, but the oiler had stated that he was in a hurry to depart. The bosun confirmed that they commonly use the deck crane for crew luggage as well as for transferring spares and supplies.

By carrying his suitcase, the oiler only had one hand to hold onto the railing on the accommodation ladder. By wearing a heavy backpack, he raised his center of gravity which made him more top heavy making him more prone to falling.



Actual Injury

When the oiler fell, he hit his head and received a concussion. He also sprained his shoulder and sustained numerous cuts, scrapes, and bruises on his face, hands, arms, and knees.

Potential Injury

The oiler could have been killed or permanently injured.

Prevention

- ★ A steep accommodation ladder is a safety hazard that should be addressed. The risks associated with a steep accommodation ladder should not be accepted but should be mitigated for example by ballasting the ship, or by coordinating with the terminal if they have a purpose-made platform available on the dock to raise the bottom of the accommodation ladder.
- ★ Mates in charge of the watch when the vessel is in port should know the limitations of the accommodation ladder including the maximum allowed angle of inclination for safe use. A best practice is to post a safe angle indicator on the gangway.
- ★ Using a vessel crane for luggage allows mariners to use both hands while on the accommodation ladder and decreases the likelihood of them falling or tripping. That should be a best practice.
- ★ Mariners should never eliminate safe practices just because they are in a hurry.

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 a mariner is stopped from using the accommodation ladder while carrying luggage and instead the crane is used for the luggage...

that's a Good Catch, too!



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