



SAFETY ALERT No. 17-14

Unexpected Release of Starboard Lifeboat¹

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Bahamas Maritime Authority wishes to bring the information referenced in paragraph 2 to the attention of interested parties².

2. Description of incident

- 2.1 Whilst alongside the loading port, a Aframax tanker conducting a Port State Control (PSC) inspection during which the testing of the lifeboat engine and rudder was required. While swinging out the starboard lifeboat, the lifeboat disengaged from the aft fall hook without any warning. The lifeboat hook did not open, instead the master link pulled clear through the gate on the on-load release gear resulting in the lifeboat falling heavily. The aft end of the boat hit the fish plate on the main deck and slid over the side resulting in the boat hanging from the forward hook. No personnel were in the lifeboat and no injuries were sustained as a result of this incident.

3. Non-Contributory factors

- 3.1 Maintenance and servicing conducted in accordance with Company and legislative requirements.
- 3.2 Heel connections of both davit arms were found to be operating as required without fault. No damage was sustained to harbour safety pins or securing arrangement of both davits indicating that the pins were clear of the davits prior to lowering.
- 3.3 Both static and centrifugal winch brake assemblies were found to be operating satisfactorily.

¹ MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1 Measures to prevent accidents with lifeboats

² This Safety Alert is provided by the Bahamas Maritime Authority with the aim of highlighting incidents, lessons learnt and to increase awareness, which may help avoid similar incidents occurring elsewhere. Any queries on the content of the information provided should be referred to the party providing the information.



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- 3.4 The fall wire, fall block and masterlink were free from damage and in good condition.
- 3.5 Functioning of the gripe hooks released the gripe cable end links as designed.
- 3.6 Both lifeboat hook release mechanisms were confirmed closed and secured with the safety pins located correctly without any sign of damage.
- 3.7 Fatigue, drug and alcohol testing and suitably trained and adequately manned records confirmed compliance with statutory requirements.

4. Contributory Factors

- 4.1 The lifeboat davits are designed for auto release of the gripes once the brakes are released. On this occasion, the crew lifted up the brake lever without manually clearing the gripes.

5. Direct Cause

- 5.1 Fouling of the aft gripe wire in between the base of the hook body and the base of the heel of the hook retainer gate restricted any further movement of the aft davit arm. Initially both davit arms moved outboard simultaneously however on approaching 10-15° away from the vertical the aft arm appeared to slow down prior to stopping completely; at which point the brake lever was applied. This indicated that a restriction on the movement of the aft davit arm existed after the arm had moved from the stowed position.
- 5.2 With the forward davit arm still moving out, the lifeboat was no longer parallel to the deck. This developed a pull between the two davit arms, which kept on increasing as the forward arm moved further outboard. This resulted in bending of the forward davit arm beyond operational use.
- 5.3 The aft gripe wire which was caught in between the retainer gate and hook body caused the masterlink to be drawn through the gate.



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Figure 1: Aft gripe wire and hook mechanism



Figure 2: Aft hook mechanism and deformed retainer gate



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6. Preventative Actions / Recommendations

- 6.1 It should be confirmed that the wire gripe have an unrestricted clear line of travel. Consideration of a deflection plate at the base of the hook body and base of the heel to prevent fouling of the wire gripe is advisable.
- 6.2 Protrusions on the wire gripe could increase the potential for snagging, this could be mitigated by regular inspections to ensure the wire gripe is as smooth as possible.
- 6.3 All retainer gates should be inspected for correct operation. All retainer gate counter weights should be examined for any damage and confirmed that they are sitting flush against the hook body.
- 6.4 Fall Preventer Devices³ should be used to minimize the risk of failure of the release mechanism or on-load release gear.

7. Validity

This alert is valid until further notice.

8. Revision History

Rev.0 (01 June 2017) – First issue

³ MSC.1/Circ.1327 (June 2009) Guidelines for the fitting and use of fall preventer devices (FPDs)