



Ship Type: All Trade Area: All

Bulletin 420 - 07/05 - Lifeboat Drill Fatality - Worldwide

The Club would like to highlight to Members a fatality that occurred onboard a Member vessel during a lifeboat drill. In these accidents, it is often found that lifeboats are falling from their falls during lifeboat drills due to the action of the crew and not faulty equipment - in most cases it is specifically the incorrect operation of the hooks. This is because crew are not familiar enough with the operation of the hooks and also that the design of most hooks is such that there is very little indication as to whether or not the hook is correctly engaged in the locked position.

The image (right) shows the damage sustained by the lifeboat conning tower on impact with the water after falling five metres and landing upside down during a lifeboat drill in the case highlighted here.



The accident happened on recovery of the lifeboat, which requires the crew inside the boat to manually hook the lifting rings of the falls into the fore and aft hooks of the lifeboat. In this case, the lifeboat was lifted approximately 20cm from the water at which point it was checked and confirmed that the hooks were holding. Unfortunately, as the lifeboat was then being recovered it suddenly fell from a height of five metres, causing the death of a crew member inside and serious injury to others.

Upon inspection it was found that all equipment was in working order and both lifting rings remained on the lifeboat falls. It should be noted that if one hook releases, the other will not hold the weight of the boat and inevitably will release also. It was concluded that one of the lifting rings was only partially inserted into the hook on the lifeboat and slipped out during recovery. On this particular lifeboat, the forward hook faces forward and the crew inside the boat do not have a good view through the access hatch when handling the hook and checking that the lifting ring is correctly inserted.

If the crew members had a good understanding of the operation of the hook and the indications that the lifting ring is fully inserted then this accident could have been prevented. The recovery procedures included the checking of the hooks with the falls taking the weight but the crew failed to identify the problem.

The Club recognises the need for lifeboat hooks to provide a clear visual indication of the release mechanism's status and recommends systems such as the 'SAFELAUNCH Lifeboat Release Hook' manufactured by Survival Craft Inspectorate Ltd in the UK. Each SAFELAUNCH release hook is provided with a colour coded indicator that provides a clear visual status of the release cam and the system is designed to be compatible with all existing types of conventional lifeboat and can be installed into new lifeboats or retrofitted to old lifeboats as an upgrade.

Source of information: Loss Prevention Department
UK P&I Club
www.ukpandi.com