



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Worldwide

Bulletin 428 - 08/05 - Gas Cutting Incident - Worldwide

A crewmember onboard a Member vessel is lucky to be alive after a recent incident involving gas cutting equipment where the work was thought to be routine and not properly planned. Approximately 35% of the crewmember's body sustained burns of partial to deep partial thickness, with some full thickness involvement to areas including the face, chest, back, arms and legs.

The crewmember was seriously burnt when using gas cutting equipment after being instructed to replace a length of pipe on the hydraulic line of a hatch cover of one of the vessel's holds. The crewmember may have shut off valves on the line but failed to drain the pipe of hydraulic oil under pressure. The crewmember decided to use gas cutting equipment to remove the pipe, which when breached covered the crewmember in a spray of hydraulic oil which was subsequently ignited by the acetylene torch, engulfing the man in a ball of fire. The acetylene and oxygen bottles were also in the vicinity.

In a desperate bid to extinguish himself the crewmember jumped overboard into the harbour where he was spotted floating 400-500 metres from the bow of the vessel. An hour and forty minutes later he was recovered to the vessel and airlifted to hospital. The man's life was saved but he had to undergo several surgeries and remained in hospital for several months.

In this case there was no supervision by a responsible person and no hot work permit. The hot work permit involves risk assessing the work before it is undertaken but this did not happen. A port state control investigation report into the incident expressed concern of the ship's safety procedures and the ISM management onboard, describing serious failures in the vessel's safety management system.

The vessel was in a condition showing lack of maintenance and it was reported that hatch cover hydraulic system isolating valves at each control station were in poor condition. The obvious attitude onboard and lack of control makes this an accident that was waiting to happen onboard this vessel.

Source of information: Loss Prevention Department
UK P&I Club