

February 2, 2004

FLEET/SAFETY LETTER 04065.GEN

RE: TANK ENTRY HAZARD

Recently a situation occurred on a non-Vanuatu vessel which nearly resulted in the loss of 2 lives, and caused a great deal of concern when entering tanks. It could have easily been avoided with very little effort. The irony is that the company had discussed this topic about a month prior, after a previous incident involving confined space entry had occurred. We are enclosing a copy of the report with the names blanked out to protect the innocent.

An inspector and a second mate were locked in a tank after entering it subsequent to washing for inspection. During the inspection, the mate who was watching the tank left to tend to some other tank inspections in accordance with the instructions from the chief mate. The inspector and second mate climbed to the tank hatch only to find that the hatch had been closed and locked. Thirty minutes passed until the mate who closed the hatch, re-opened it and the two escaped. Apparently, the chief mate, who told the mate watching the tank to inspect some other tanks, instructed another mate to start closing the tanks that were already inspected.

The situation could have easily resulted in fatalities. The company took action to purchase cable locks to help prevent re-occurrence. Why they did not do this after the first incident is still a mystery.

Enclosed space entry can be risky, sometimes dangerous, and on occasion fatal. Review your enclosed space entry procedures in your safety management system and be sure all officers and ratings understand the potential risks.

Thank you and best regards

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