

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 10-24

To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Nautical Inspectors, Recognized Organizations

Subject: FATALITIES DUE TO FALLS FROM HEIGHT

Date: 27 November 2024

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) reminds vessel owners, operators, ships officers, and crewmembers of the need to wear fall protection equipment when a risk of falling from height exists.

Since 2019, falls from height on RMI-flagged vessels have been the leading very serious marine casualty (VSMC)¹ by incident type, accounting for 31% of VSMCs in this period and resulting in the loss of 22 lives. In the last two years alone, 11 seafarers have died falling from height.

1.0 Falls from Height

1.1 The Administrator has identified the following observations concerning falls from height, including:

- .1 six incidents occurred while seafarers were descending inclined or vertical ladders² while entering a cargo hold;
- .2 seven incidents occurred while seafarers were rigging, descending, or ascending a pilot ladder or accommodation ladder;
- .3 in the majority of cases, a toolbox talk was conducted prior to undertaking a task where a risk of falling existed;
- .4 the Safety Management System (SMS) procedures, Permit-to-Work, Risk Assessments, and/or Personal Protection Equipment matrix failed to identify and provide sufficient direction and guidance in the conduct of work required to be performed as it relates to the risks associated with falls, both while working and while moving to and from the work site. For example, inconsistent use of terminology used within SMS procedures, such as working from height and working aloft, allowed for risks associated with falling to be overlooked.

¹ A VSMC means a marine casualty involving the total loss of the ship or a death or severe damage to the environment.

² Including Australian ladders.

This MSA is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

2.0 Causal Factors

- 2.1 The following causal factors that were identified during the Administrator's marine safety investigations of these incidents included:
- .1 inadequate pre-task identification and assessment of hazards associated with falling;
 - .2 inadequate supervision before commencement of work and during the execution of work;
 - .3 non-compliance with safety procedures for working from height or over/near the ship's side;
 - .4 Stop-Work Authority not properly exercised on board when a hazardous condition was observed;
 - .5 not securing portable ladders or scaffolding while being used;
 - .6 deliberate disregard to using appropriate personal protective equipment; and
 - .7 insufficient or lack of situational awareness.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 To prevent additional fatalities and serious injuries from falls, including falls overboard, the Administrator recommends that owners and operators review their shipboard SMS procedures after conducting task and location specific safety assessments addressing the risk of falling.
- 3.2 It is also recommended to display the accompanying Safety Flyer on Falls on board in areas where seafarers are likely to interact with it on a daily basis.
- 3.3 Masters should hold a special safety meeting to review and discuss the information provided in this Marine Safety Advisory and attached Safety Flyer on Falls to ensure that risks of falling from height are adequately understood.