

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 10-26

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

Subject: INCIDENTS INVOLVING CARGO GRABS

Date: 21 August 2026

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) has investigated several fatal occupational accidents involving cargo grabs on RMI-flagged bulk carriers. These incidents demonstrate the presence of significant hazards associated with maintenance activity on cargo handling equipment and related activities, which must be considered when planning such activities.

1.0 Incident Similarities

1.1 The Administrator's marine safety investigations identified that:

- .1 toolbox talks either lacked sufficient detail, were based on scanty information, or were not conducted at all, which resulted in crewmembers being unaware of the work activity being conducted, associated hazards, or the operational state of equipment;
- .2 crewmembers involved in the work activity were not familiar with grab operating procedures, including critical safety functions and abnormal equipment conditions;
- .3 the available manufacturer documentation and shipboard procedures did not provide sufficient guidance for safely conducting maintenance and troubleshooting activities;
- .4 crewmembers who witnessed unsafe conditions or unsafe acts did not exercise their stop-work authority; and
- .5 in all cases, crewmembers were exposed to inadequately mitigated crushing, entrapment, or unexpected movement hazards of cargo grab components.

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is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.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

2.1 The Administrator strongly recommends that:

- .1 an assessment of all risks related to non-routine, breakdown, and troubleshooting activities of cargo grabs and associated lifting appliances is conducted to identify all reasonably foreseeable hazards, including those arising from stored energy, abnormal equipment configurations, and unintended equipment movement;
- .2 owners and operators review their shipboard Safety Management System procedures to ensure task and location-specific safety assessments addressing maintenance activity are conducted so that permit to work systems, where necessary, are rigorously enforced when accessing cargo grabs;
- .3 planned maintenance systems are reviewed to include all prescribed maintenance activities, including verification and testing of critical safety functions;
- .4 training and familiarization of specific hazards and operating principles of cargo handling equipment is provided to all crewmembers tasked with handling, repairing, troubleshooting, or inspecting such equipment; and
- .5 where a stop-work authority is in place, review the stop-work policy and procedure to ensure it can be exercised without fear of repercussion.

2.2 The Administrator also strongly recommends that Masters:

- .1 review cargo grab manufacturer manuals and compare them against the current onboard arrangement and practices, and request further instructions from the manufacturer if information related to repair, inspection, or maintenance is missing;
- .2 conduct safety meetings to review the circumstances and lessons learned from recent cargo grab incidents and reinforce the importance of compliance with permit-to-work systems, risk assessments, hazard identification processes, and toolbox talks;
- .3 remind all crewmembers that stop-work authority applies equally to every individual on board, regardless of rank, position, or seniority;
- .4 verify that the work activity has been adequately planned prior to commencing any routine and non-routine maintenance activity, that all foreseeable hazards have been identified and controlled, and that all crewmembers involved in the work activity are properly familiarized with the equipment and operating procedures; and
- .5 ensure appropriate supervision of maintenance and troubleshooting activities with particular reference where crewmembers may be exposed to hazardous energy, moving machinery, crushing zones, or entrapment risks.