



भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

पोत परिवहन, मंत्रालय

MINISTRY OF SHIPPING,

चीवहन महानिदेशालय / DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING

"जहाज भवन" / "JAHAZ BHAVAN"

वालचंद हीराचंद मार्ग / W. H. MARG,

मुंबई / MUMBAI - 400 001

टेलिफोन: 22613651-54

फैक्स : 91-22-22613655

E-Mail: dgship@dgshipping.com

Tele: 22613651-54

Fax: 91-22-22613655

Web: www.dgshipping.com

सं./ No :

दिनांक / Dated:

File No. 11-NT (71)/2010

30.04.2013

Casualty Circular No. 7/2013

Suicide by Chief Officer by jumping overboard from a Chemical tanker

1. What happened?

On 23rd August 2010 at 0640 hrs, a Chief Officer, 31 years of age, was reported missing from a chemical tanker. Vessel was en route from Hamburg to Amsterdam, at the time of the incident. On 3rd Sept. 2010, the mortal remains of the chief officer were recovered from the sea off the coast of Holland. The weather, at the time of the incident, was fair and moderate.

2. How it happened?

2.1 The vessel had sailed out from Hamburg on 22nd Aug 2010 at 1106 hrs, for dry-docking at Amsterdam. Tank cleaning was carried out on 22nd from 1845 hrs to 2330 hrs by the Chief Officer.

2.2 At 0640 hrs, the Master had called the Bridge to find out the status of tank cleaning. He was told by the 3rd officer that the Chief Officer had not come on watch. A search was carried out on board and at 0710 hrs, a man overboard distress message was broadcasted and the vessel was turned around for sea search. The search was carried out in co-ordination with Bremen MRCC and Netherlands Coast Guard. A helicopter was also deployed for the search by the Netherlands Coast Guard. Search was unsuccessful.

2.3 The Chief Officer was seen by the Master at about 2000 hrs, in the CCR, engaged in tank cleaning the previous evening. Later, he was seen at about 2330 hrs, watching a movie with the electrical officer and smoking in the mess room. He was seen sleeping in the officer's mess room around midnight by the Wiper. He was again seen at 0245hrs, on 23rd August 2010 by the Fitter and last seen at 0410 hrs by the Oiler, in the engine room alleyway. At 0640hrs the Cadet was sent to look for the Chief Officer after the Master's call on the Bridge. When the Cadet could not find him a search was initiated on board. During the search on board, the Chief Officer's bracelet was found on the gunwale port side upper deck, along with some cigarette butts and shoe marks.

2.4 On 3rd Sept, at 0730 hrs, the crew of a passing German yacht noticed a floating body at sea, which was later recovered by the maritime police.

2.5 The Chief officer had joined the vessel on 5th May on 4 month contract which was to complete on 30th August. He had already given one month notice for his relief. This was the Chief Officer's first ship rank. He was a well built person, 6' 4" in height and was reported to be a quiet person. He was well reported by the Master and other crew members on board with nothing unusual being noted regarding his behavior. He was reported to be social drinker. As per the statements of the deck crew, the chief officer was a honest officer and focused on safety.

2.6 Based on the copies of the hand written notes found in his cabin, it would appear that the Chief Officer had encountered some problems in the course of his work, as the person responsible for cargo operations. Notes relating to bunker and draft calculations, with comments criticizing self, were found in his cabin. However, he had not informed the Master about these problems or the extent of it nor had he shared these issues with any other person on board. His notes indicate a fear for loss of career, family and money and also mentioned suicide as the only option. His notes also indicate that he feared imprisonment due to possibly, some errors in cargo calculations which he blamed himself for. Apparently, this concern had caused him excessive mental disturbance and emotional upheaval. In one of the notes, addressed to his wife, mother, father, relatives and friends, it was mentioned that he was sorry and too proud to admit failure and that he loved them very much. He also mentioned that he will be seeing them in spirit.

3. Why it happened?

The Chief Officer probably committed suicide due to his inability to cope with the demands of his new rank. His notes clearly indicate that he was

unwilling to accept failure and unwilling to discuss issues with colleagues or seniors. The autopsy report gave the cause of death as drowning.

4. Lessons learnt.

4.1 Ship-owners/managers/operators should take note of the incident and consider necessary value added training to the newly promoted officers, particularly those who are being promoted to the management positions i.e. to the chief officer or 2nd engineer positions or equivalent.

4.2 Duties and responsibilities of newly promoted officers should be effectively monitored and guidance provided where required, by senior officers on board and by shore based superintendents, as the case may be, ensuring that they are able to cope with their new responsibilities.



Capt. Harish Khatri
Dy. Director General of Shipping [Tech]