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**Casualty Circular No. 10/2013**

**Case of missing Oiler from a tug alongside the port**

**1. What happened?**

On 27<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at 0230 hrs, an Oiler, 22 years of age, was reported missing from a tug. The tug was alongside the port. His body was later found on the river bank nearby, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at around 0900 hrs.

**2. How it happened?**

**2.1** The tug was regularly involved in port operations within the port limits. The Oiler was to keep the engine room watch from 2000-0200 hrs. The duty seaman, on deck, during his rounds at 0230 hrs, noted that the engine room was not manned. He looked for the Oiler in his cabin but did not find him. The duty seaman went to the cabin of the next watch keeper who was to keep watch from 0200 hrs onwards. The next watch keeper was found to be still sleeping as he was not woken up by the missing Oiler to relieve him. The search of the vessel was carried out but was unsuccessful. The Master was informed at 0400 hrs, who in turn informed the terminal authorities. Surrounding areas along the river front were searched and tugs in the vicinity were also informed about the missing Oiler. The search continued, on board as well as in the port, with the assistance of the port authorities. The body of the missing Oiler was found on the river bank, the next day, at around 0900hrs, by the police. As per the autopsy report, the death was caused due to drowning.

at these times. Investigation and interviews with the crew also did not reveal any unusual behavior or problems with other crew members on board.

**2.3** The investigation did not reveal any foul play. Neither did the search of the vessel and the belongings of the Oiler, reveal any indication for foul play or suicide.

### **3. Why it happened?**

**3.1** The results of the investigation are largely inconclusive but considering the sequence of events, it would appear that the Oiler most probably fell into the water inadvertently, while on deck and drowned. Autopsy report also indicates that death occurred due to drowning. No foul play or suicide was suspected.

**3.2** It is also possible that the Oiler fell overboard because of stumbling on an obstruction while walking close to the ship side. Several other causes can be speculated because of which crew members can fall overboard, such as fishing while alongside or at anchor, checking for over side discharges, slips/trips on decks etc.

### **4. Lessons learnt.**

**4.1** Hazards of moving carelessly on open decks should be highlighted to crew members on board, at regular intervals. Senior staff should also be cautioned not to be complacent and overconfident.

**4.2** Ship owners/managers/operators should carry out risk assessments and identify potential hazards that exist on board due to which crew members are likely to fall overboard. Appropriate control measures should be implemented to mitigate the consequences of identified hazards by way of procedures, physical barriers, highlighting of obstructions or design changes as appropriate.



**(Capt. Harish Khatri)**

**Dy. Director General of Shipping [Tech]**