

Marine Safety Forum – Safety Flash 09/21

Issued: 14th June 2009

Subject: Back Loading High Potential Near Miss

Summary:

A recent high potential near miss occurred on a PSV during the back loading of a crane boom section from an offshore installation. Although no injuries were sustained as a result of this incident, two ABs working on the main deck at this time could potentially have been crushed resulting in 2 fatalities.

Incident:

At the time of the incident, the PSV was starboard side alongside the installation back loading the second section of a crane boom.

This back loaded crane boom section was first landed on deck with no clearance from adjacent tote tanks. However, the ABs had to pass between these tote tanks and the back loaded crane boom section to access the crane hook for unlatching. Therefore, the crane operator was asked to move the back loaded crane boom section towards the port side of the main deck to create a gap to allow the ABs clear access.

The crane operator moved the back loaded crane boom section 1-2 meters to port and asked the Bridge whether the new position was satisfactory. The Bridge then confirmed with the ABs on deck that this new position was acceptable for them and then advised the crane operator accordingly. The crane wire was then slackened down and the ABs started to pass between the back loaded crane boom section and the nearby tote tanks to unlatch the crane hook.



The crane operator then started to heave and raised the back loaded crane boom section by about 1 meter to approximately waist height with the ABs positioned between this back loaded crane boom section and the tote tanks. This resulted in a potential for the ABs to be crushed between the back loaded crane boom section and the tote tanks.

The Bridge shouted a warning on the UHF radio to the ABs who were already aware of the hazardous situation and were moving to a safe position. The crane operator also then lowered the back loaded crane boom section to deck.

The prevailing weather conditions at the time of the incident were within acceptable working limits, consisting of a wind speed of 19 knots and sea conditions with a significant wave height of between 1.5 and 2.0 meters.

Main Findings and Recommendations:

The crane operator lifted the back loaded crane boom section off the vessel's deck but failed to effectively communicate his intention to the vessel personnel. The crane operator also assumed that the vessel's deck was clear of personnel.

The investigation of this incident identified the need to instruct crane operators to:-

- communicate their actions to the vessel before proceeding with lifting operations
- ensure that all communications are fully understood and verified by all relevant installation and vessel personnel before proceeding with any lifting operation
- avoid making assumptions and to verify with the vessel that the deck area is clear of all personnel before proceeding with lifting operations.

