

Safety Alert

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Subject: Scaffolding Unit Collapse – Hi Potential Incident

What Happened / Narrative

A three-tier mobile scaffolding unit was being repositioned near the provisions crane pedestal by the Bosun and an AB. Due to seized wheels; the scaffold was moved by dragging rather than rolling. When the scaffold reached a raised metal plate near a skylight, the unit was lifted to continue movement.

During this activity, the scaffold became unstable and collapsed, falling three deck levels to the main deck. At the time of the collapse, no exclusion or drop zone had been established on the lower deck. No personnel were present below and no injuries were sustained.

Why Did it Happen / Cause

- The mobile scaffolding unit was not confirmed fit for movement.
- The scope and risk of moving a multi-tier scaffold were underestimated, increasing instability and consequence.
- Task planning and the reassessment of changes were insufficient.
- Risk controls were not effectively implemented, including personnel exclusion from potential drop zones.
- Stop Work Obligation was not applied when risk increased.

Lessons Learned

- Scaffold must be fit for use before handling or movement – Seized wheels, ineffective brakes, and unsecured locking pins significantly increase instability risk.
- Scaffold height and design must match onboard capability – Multi-tier scaffolds introduce higher risk and require appropriate competency, planning, and visible supervisory oversight.
- Risk assessments must result in effective work controls – Identified hazards require active implementation and verification, including exclusion/drop zones and line-of-fire management.
- Stop Work Obligation must be applied when risk increases – Tasks should be paused when conditions change, difficulty is encountered, or additional planning or resources are required.

Photographs / Supporting Information



Ask Yourself and Your Crew:

1. Is the scaffold confirmed fit for movement before we handle it? (Wheels, brakes, locking pins, height, and overall stability)
2. What could cause loss of control or a falling object during movement, and have we established an exclusion/drop zone?
3. If the task becomes difficult or conditions change, do we pause and apply Stop Work Obligation?

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