

Slips, Trips, Falls and Working at Heights

By Shannon Smith

Working at heights is a high risk activity in any industry. The OSHA website states that Slips, Trips and Falls (including falls from heights) account for, "...15% of accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities." That is why regulations exist for working at heights and for Walking/ Working Surfaces for almost every industry.

What does Working at Heights have to do with slips and trips?

A vessel is a multilevel structure with almost unlimited potential exposures for falling to a surface below, which could be another deck, a tank or into the water. So the risk of a fall from height can exist even if you are just walking across the deck.

The regulations for walking/ working surfaces are designed to prevent those type of falls by requiring guard rails and barriers around open access hatches or other gaps in a working surface large enough to cause a slip, trip or fall injury.

Various regulations require fall protection be provided for workers exposed to falls ranging from 4 ft (marine terminals) to 15 ft (steel erectors). TDI has adopted the construction industry's 6 foot rule.

What is fall protection?

Fall protection is anything that prevents a worker from falling and includes hand rails, guardrails, safety nets, warning lines, self retracting lifelines, fall arrest systems, fall restraint systems, shock absorbing lanyards and more.

The most commonly used types of fall protection used on TDI vessels are fall arrest systems, safety chains and safety nets (under the gangways).

TDI Employees have been trained that working at heights over 6 feet above the deck requires a permit and fall harness. We're used to looking up when thinking of falling from height. However, open hatches, temporary openings in the deck due to maintenance or construction or loose tank covers can present fall risks as well.

In the following story you will hear how the common practice of leaving a hatch open to pass cable and hoses through it during work at the dock resulted in a worker's death.

The hazard wasn't recognized or mitigated. A temporary guardrail or even hi-vis caution tape could have been enough to warn the worker away from the danger of the open hatch.



"...the Captain and crew were lulled into a false sense of security from years of using the same practice without incident..."

Maritime NZ Director Keith Manch nvironmental

Got Something to Share?

If you have an idea for an HSE safety topic, a way to improve our processes or procedures or other suggestions, comments stories or pictures, send them to HSE@tdi-bi.com.

TOP 3 Safety Card Hits

(Fleetwide this month)

Housekeeping 21

Tools & Equipment 14

Maintenance/ Inspections 13

Routine practice results in worker's death



New Zealand's fishing firm Talleys Group Ltd has been fined \$48,000 and ordered to pay \$35,000 in reparation to the family of a crewman killed after falling nearly 7m on the vessel *Capt MJ Souza* in Nelson in May 2012. Crewman Cain Adams died after he stepped onto a hatch on the main deck that rotated, causing him to fall nearly 6.9m through another open hatch in the deck below to the floor of the vessel's fish well.

The company was sentenced in Nelson District Court on 29 April after being found guilty in March of failing to take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of its employees after the death of crewman Cain Adams.

At the time of the accident, several contractors were at work on the vessel, with the hatch on the main deck left vented, or partly open, to allow hoses and cables to pass through it.

In his judgment, District Court Judge Ian Mill said the company "either foresaw the risk but did not take all reasonably practical steps in the circumstances of this case or ought to have foreseen the risk and failed to do so".

"These practical steps were no more than ones already available but not used because **the Captain and crew were lulled into a false sense of security from years of using the same practice without incident** and always treating a vented hatch as safe," Judge Mill said.

Maritime NZ Director Keith Manch said lessons must be learned from the accident.

"This was a tragic incident that could have been avoided through very simple measures," he said.

"Ships are inherently dangerous working environments and employers must ensure all practicable safety steps are taken to protect their employees when they are on the job. All employees have the right to come home safely from work.

"Our thoughts are very much with the family of Cain Adams, for whom this case will have been extremely difficult, but the whole of the maritime sector must heed the lessons of this case."

Read the entire story at <http://maritimeaccident.org/2015/04/21570/>

Safety Tips

Hierarchy of Fall Protection



Eliminate the risk



Guard the hazard



Protect the worker