



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector Guam

March 4, 2021
Santa Rita, Guam

Findings of Concern 001 - 21

UNSAFE CARGO AND EQUIPMENT TRANSFER OPERATIONS

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. Recently, the Coast Guard completed two investigations involving crew fatalities onboard commercial fishing vessels operating in the Distant Water Tuna Fleet. These deaths occurred during cargo and heavy equipment transfer operations, both internally, and to another vessel. These incidents, which occurred in the remote reaches of the southern Pacific Ocean, were the result of failed lifting gear and shifting or falling cargo or equipment that ultimately struck and killed crewmembers directly and indirectly involved in the lift operations.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The Coast Guard investigations into these accidents revealed that, as part of their routine duties, crewmembers serving in the Distant Water Tuna Fleet often engage in the transfer of cargo and heavy equipment onto, off of, and within their vessels. Despite the hazards associated with these transfer operations, safety policies, procedures, and oversight provided by vessel owners and operators has proven to be, at best, inadequate.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures as prudent to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Designate vessel Safety Officers responsible for providing oversight of all maritime activities, particularly those associated with the transfer of cargo and heavy equipment.
- Provide vessels with adequate safety and personal protective equipment (PPE) to mitigate the hazards associated with cargo and heavy equipment transfer operations.
- Establish and implement cargo and/or heavy equipment transfer procedures aboard vessels to include minimum safety requirements and, if applicable, shipboard crane operating procedures.
- Provide adequate training to crewmembers involved in the operation of shipboard cranes.
- Provide and maintain adequate lifting equipment for vessels outfitted with shipboard cranes.
- Ensure those onboard that are not involved in the lift or transfer are outside the hazard zone and are protected should the lift fail.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Sector Guam Investigations Division by phone at (671) 355-4937 or by email at PreventionGuam@uscg.mil.