

Subject Compliance with recommendations *Fall from height - fatal accident on board the Zeeland Rotterdam*

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1. About this report

On 23 November 2019, a seaman fell from a grab on one of the ship's cranes on board the Dutch bulk carrier (Zeeland Rotterdam) at a sea anchorage close to Mumbai, India. The lifting block made a sudden swinging motion and hit the seaman while he was attaching the grab. The seaman fell over backwards and landed on his head on the deck below, suffering fatal injuries. The occupational hygiene strategy was not complied with while working at height and the seaman was not wearing a safety helmet or fall protection, despite the fact that both were available and compulsory. During the investigation, it was not possible to determine with certainty the cause of the sudden swinging of the lifting block.

In its report, the Board concluded that in this incident the binding agreements embedded in the ship's Safety Management System (SMS) were not complied with in all cases. Rules on wearing or using personal protective equipment and mandatory preliminary meetings on the work to be carried out were not complied with on board the vessel in question. Moreover, the crew used a non-standard procedure to attach the grab to the crane. When assembling the crew, a common working language was not considered. Finally, a new crew was introduced on the vessel that replaced, rather than observed, the old crew. This meant that there was insufficient ship-specific experience on board to ensure the safe completion of the journey and related work tasks.

In its report, the Dutch Safety Board issued three recommendations to the Dutch ship manager Q-Shipping. The recommendations are aimed at eliminating the safety-related shortcomings described above and the resulting dangers. Q-Shipping responded to the recommendations by email on 2 November 2022. Q-Shipping's full response is available on the Dutch Safety Board's website.

This memorandum contains a general conclusion on the compliance with the recommendations, followed by a short summary of the responses received to each recommendation and a conclusion about compliance with that recommendation.

2. General conclusion about compliance

The purpose of the recommendations was to modify formal procedures to address the identified safety-related shortcomings. The recommendations were defined based on information provided by Q-Shipping during the investigation. This showed that a modification to the Safety Management System was necessary.

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Q-Shipping responded to the recommendations of the Dutch Safety Board by sending a so-called *Q-Circular* within its own organization. It appears that this is a newsletter for employees, but its exact status and circulation remain unclear.

The introductory paragraph of this document refers to “all our meetings and discussions, as well in office and on board” about the fatal accident in November 2019. The Board cannot verify the nature of these meetings, who was present and what was discussed. The footnote of the *Q-Circular* calls for this document to be discussed with the crew during meetings on agreements on working practice. It is unclear how this point has been embedded. In addition, it was said that the *Q-Circular* would be included in the *Circular folder*. The Board cannot ascertain to what extent and for how long this will ensure the importance and visibility of this document.

In response to recommendation 3, Q-Shipping does not mention the desired frequency of the visits and how Q-Shipping itself intends to ensure that these visits take place at regular intervals. It also remains unclear how the supervision of vessels not calling at European ports has been arranged.

It appears that the recommendations are being complied with in the *Q-Circular*, but information on actual modifications in the formal procedures is lacking. It is not known how Q-Shipping envisions or has implemented actual embedding of the recommendations.

Based on the information provided, the Board cannot ascertain the impact of the implementation of the recommendations.

3. Compliance by recommendation

Recommendation 1

To Q-Shipping:

1. Also in cases where a vessel is completing the ship manager’s final journey, maintain a fully experienced crew, and deploy any new crew members as supernumeraries, in a learning role, not as replacements for original crew members. In all cases, ensure a common working language in which all crew members can communicate with one another.

Response

The *Q-Circular* addressed to all employees of Q-Shipping states that during the final journey, the experienced crew employed by Q-Shipping or the crewing agency contracted by them will remain on board until the handover to the new manager has taken place. The new manager

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only allows new employees to be present as observers. The working language must be English.

Conclusion on compliance

Based on the information provided, the Board cannot ascertain the impact of the implementation of the recommendation.

Recommendation 2

To Q-Shipping:

2. At all times, ensure sufficient time is available to take the specified measures and to implement the procedures laid down on board in the Safety Management System (SMS), also in situations with time pressure. For the development of procedures for high-risk activities, such as attaching a grab to a crane, observe the occupational hygiene strategy.

Response

Q-Shipping urges its employees to take the time to adhere to the procedures in the Safety Management Manuals and to use the personal protective equipment available on board. Time pressure should not play a role in assessing the risks and adhering to the procedures. Furthermore, the document indicates that the captain should feel supported by the ship manager to enforce safety regulations on board.

Conclusion on compliance

Based on the information provided, the Board cannot ascertain the impact of the implementation of the recommendation.

Recommendation 3

To Q-Shipping:

3. Ensure that supervision by the ship manager of vessels that do not regularly visit European ports is implemented effectively, whether or not the supervision is provided from the Dutch or the foreign office.

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Response

Q-Shipping indicated that if required documents such as visas are obtained in a timely manner, vessels should be visited frequently by office staff.

Conclusion on compliance

Based on the information provided, the Board cannot ascertain the impact of the implementation of the recommendation.