

# SAFETY CIRCULAR ON A FATAL ACCIDENT DUE TO BREAKDOWN IN COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

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## INTRODUCTION

In Jun 2003, a painter fell 16 meters from an opening on a scaffold erected inside a tank onboard a ship and landed at the bottom of tank. He was killed on the spot.

Two hand-held lamps  
& a flood light were  
provided

Opening in the scaffold



- While he was inside the tank, the deceased fell through the opening on the scaffold work platform. The opening was due to the removal of scaffold planks during the dismantling process.
- Although the "**NO ENTRY**" and "**DO NOT USE THE SCAFFOLD**" signs were clearly displayed at the entrance to the tank, the deceased still proceeded to enter the tank to carry out the touch up work.
- Illumination (lighting conditions) inside the tank was poor.

The deceased had  
gained access from this  
manhole

The signage "**DO NOT  
USE THE SCAFFOLD**"



## OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

- The deceased was in the tank to touch up the paintwork for a sensor mounting. While he was walking on a scaffold platform inside the tank, he fell through an opening on the scaffold. The distance of fall was about 16 meters.
- One day prior to the accident, the ship repair manager was informed that the inspection of the paintwork inside the tank had been cleared and accepted by the vessel owner and that the scaffolds inside the tank were ready for dismantling. Instruction was then passed to the scaffold contractor to dismantle of the scaffolds on the next day (the day of the accident).
- The painting foreman, however, was not aware of the instruction to dismantle the scaffold. On the morning of the day of accident, the painting foreman instructed his chargehand to conduct a final check on the tank. The deceased was subsequently assigned to touch up the paintwork inside the tank.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Investigations revealed that the cause of accident was attributed to a lack of coordination and communication between the relevant trades which resulted in the concurrent execution of scaffold dismantling and painting works inside the tank. Coordination of work activities established at the vessel safety co-ordinate committee meeting should be properly communicated to all affected parties, including their foremen and workers.
- Shipyards are reminded to instill their workers on the importance to observe strictly all safety signs such as "**NO ENTRY**" signs into confined spaces and tanks.
- Adequate lighting should be provided while work is being carried out inside the tank.