

Confined space fatality on-board the fishing vessel Sunbeam

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The UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has published a report into a confined space fatality on-board the fishing vessel Sunbeam at Fraserburgh in the UK, in August 2018.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Work authorisation



Confined space



What happened?

The second engineer entered a refrigerated saltwater tank (RSW) (which was being prepared for cleaning) and collapsed.

He was seen lying unconscious at the aft end of the tank by a crewmate, who immediately raised the alarm.

Three of the vessels' crew entered the tank and tried to resuscitate the second engineer, but they soon became dizzy, confused and short of breath.

One of the crew managed to climb out of the tank unaided, the other two crewmen and the second engineer were recovered onto the open deck by two crewmen wearing breathing apparatus.

The two crewmen made a full recovery, but the second engineer could not be resuscitated and died.



What went wrong?

It was unclear when and why the second engineer entered the tank. However, evidence indicated that his intention was to sweep the residual seawater that had settled at the aft end of the tank forward in to the tank's bilge well.

No safety procedures for entering or working in RSW tanks had been completed before he entered the tank.

What lessons were learned?

The MAIB notes that:

- Working in enclosed or confined spaces is potentially hazardous; procedures for entering and working in them should be robust,

understood and utilised.

- Enclosed space rescue plans need to be in place on all vessels, risks must be understood, and rescue plans practised.
- All crew members have a responsibility for their own safety; this is particularly important in respect of lone working.

The full report can be found [here](#).

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