

Lifeboat damaged during deployment drill

Safety Flash Published on 23 January 2018 Generated on 28 January 2026 IMCA SF 02/18

A lifeboat was damaged because of equipment failure during a routine deployment drill.

What happened?

During a routine boat drill in port, the starboard lifeboat was lowered to water level. The hooks were released by pulling the release wire in the boat. When the crew were hooking the boat back on, the lock lever of the forward hook would not turn. After much difficulty, the lock lever was turned enough to prevent the boat from unhooking.

During this delay in hooking, owing to the wave motion, the boat came in contact with the side of the vessel, causing minor damage where the railing supports were drilled through the lifeboat's fibreglass hull.

What went wrong? What were the causes?

- The release wire was broken inside the sheathing and this was not visible to the crew.
- The on-load release mechanism hook could not be locked in the shut position and the locking piece for the forward hook froze, delayed the hoisting.
- A **causal factor** was that the release wire was not inspected or checked by the maker during the 5 yearly tests of lifeboat in the dry dock which had been completed two months prior to this incident.
- **Root causes** identified included:
 - There were no clear instructions in the maker's manual regarding renewal intervals of sheathed wires.
 - Inadequate compliance/risk seen as tolerable – the service technician certified the condition of the boats and its equipment as good based on the test conducted at a recent drydocking.

What actions were taken? What lessons were learnt?

- Deeper awareness needed of the risks involved with hidden or difficult to

access failure or corrosion.

- Instructions on renewing the release wires as per maker's recommendation to be placed on board.
- Use portable fenders if available when work is being carried out on boats while at water level and the sea state demands it.

IMCA Safety Flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing lessons to be more easily learnt for the benefit of the entire offshore industry.

The effectiveness of the IMCA Safety Flash system depends on the industry sharing information and so avoiding repeat incidents. Incidents are classified according to IOGP's Life Saving Rules.

All information is anonymised or sanitised, as appropriate, and warnings for graphic content included where possible.

IMCA makes every effort to ensure both the accuracy and reliability of the information shared, but is not be liable for any guidance and/or recommendation and/or statement herein contained.

The information contained in this document does not fulfil or replace any individual's or Member's legal, regulatory or other duties or obligations in respect of their operations. Individuals and Members remain solely responsible for the safe, lawful and proper conduct of their operations.

Share your safety incidents with [IMCA online](#). Sign-up to receive Safety Flashes [straight to your email](#).