

Blocked emergency exit hatch

Safety Flash Published on 11 January 2023 Generated on 28 January 2026 IMCA SF 02/23

An engine room emergency exit hatch could not be opened.

What happened?

The emergency exit hatch providing egress from the engine room to the vessel's main deck on the starboard side at the stern, was found blocked during the Master's routine inspection/walkaround. The hatch could not be opened from the engine room compartment.

Figure 1: Emergency exit hatch was blocked by wire ropes

What went right?

This serious issue was swiftly discovered and corrected following a regular "safety walk-around".

What went wrong?

It was discovered that the hatch was blocked by wire ropes left on top of it during recent spooling works on the main deck area.

These activities had been observed on deck, as part of the anchor handling preparation process conducted by a contractor party.

The used wires left on top of the emergency hatch were not noticed by the deck crew.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls

Lessons learned

- Keep emergency escape routes free of obstructions and in a safe condition at all times.
- Better control of third-party activities onboard.
- Hold regular "cold eyes" or cross-departmental reviews and safety walk-arounds. You may be surprised at what the Cook will discover on a walk round the back deck, or what the Third Engineer will spot on a visit to the bridge wing.

- Imagine yourself in the position of the person who might be trapped by that stuck hatch. What can YOU do to make sure that never happens?

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](#).