

## Lifeboat brake release failure

Safety Flash Published on 1 January 1999 Generated on 20 January 2025 IMCA SF 02/99

During the lowering of a Watercraft lifeboat to the sea for planned annual maintenance and test run, the brake release cable became snarled on its reel.

### What happened?

The end of the brake cable was pulled through the top of the boat and was therefore not available for the coxswain to continue the descent, leaving the lifeboat approximately 2 metres from the water level.

The brake release cable is believed to have been rove onto the drum in manner whereby the turns of the cable have become tangled, this is suspected to have occurred during a previous falls rope change out.

### The following recommendations were made as a result of this incident:

- Procedures for rope change out and brake release function should be reviewed to ensure that brake drum cables are correctly positioned on the reels when returned to the falls position.
- All procedures involving winches should be reviewed to address the issue of 'reeling in'.

*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](#).