Lack of safety awareness: crush injury during lifting operations

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A Member has reported an incident in which a crewman suffered minor crush injuries when his hand was caught between two objects during lifting operations.

What happened?

The incident occurred when some oil drums were being positioned on the deck using the crane, with the assistance of two deck crew. One was handling the tag line while the other was acting as the lift supervisor and was equipped with a radio to communicate with the crane operator. While manoeuvring the drums between a deck cargo of containers, the two deck crew attempted to man-handle the drums 1.5 metres horizontally without slewing the crane jib.

The acting lift supervisor was pushing on the drum while the other pulled on the tag line. The acting lift supervisor radioed the crane operator and asked him to hoist a little; he was unaware at the time that the hoist wire was snagged on the container; this caused the drum to pinch the acting lift supervisor's hand between the drum and container. He sustained a minor crush injury and was sent ashore for x-rays.

What were the causes?

The member's investigation noted that:

- Existing company procedures were not followed.
- Risk assessments had not been completed.
- The individuals involved in the operation demonstrated a lack of safety awareness that put themselves, their colleagues and their vessel at risk.
- The individuals involved in the operation had received no training in this specific task.

Lessons learnt

The following lessons were learnt from the incident:

- Complacency with regard to any lifting operation, however small, must be guarded against.

- All persons involved in a task, from deck officers and supervisors to deck crew, should have a clear understanding of the nature of the task and their duties with regard to the task.
- All crew should have a deeper understanding of the requirement for risk assessment for all ‘routine’ and non-‘routine’ tasks.
- All crew members should be reminded of the importance of accepting personal responsibility for safety and that they all are empowered to stop work until safe operations are restored.
- Shipboard training and familiarisation should include specific training in particular tasks and equipment.

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