Galley fryer fire

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A Member has reported an incident in which a fire occurred during 'routine' cleaning and operation of a twin vat deep fat fryer onboard a vessel.

What happened?

The night shift galley team were given the task of cleaning a twin vat deep fat fryer. This task was carried out by them, however on completion only one of the twin vats was refilled with oil. This fact was not communicated to the day shift galley team.

The day shift team were required to use the fryer shortly after starting work, and it was switched on by one of the stewards without any pre-start checks being carried out. Shortly after the fryer was switched on a small fire started in the left-hand (empty) vat, which was quickly extinguished by the cook. There were no injuries and little damage occurred.

What were the causes?

The incident was investigated and the following was noted:

- No procedure existed detailing that the fryer should be refilled after cleaning.
- The risk assessment did not identify the risk of fire if the unit was switched on without oil being at the required level in the vat.
- The galley team shift handover was inadequate.
- The galley team had inadequate knowledge of the fryer operation.
- The unit was 'routine'ly being switched on at the main isolation point, despite there being two thermostatic controls to operate the vats independently of one another.
- Not all galley staff had the confidence to tackle the fire, and had not attended recent emergency drills.
- This was the second deep fat fryer fire on a company vessel in the previous six months, both having similar causes.

It was noted that a fire risk with deep fat fryers will always exist where personnel are not adequately trained in the correct operation and maintenance of such equipment.

It was also noted that key errors were made where the unit was left without oil in

one vat and then switched on with no check made that it was functioning correctly, and that there were no control measures in place for the cleaning of the fryer.

Actions

The following actions were outlined:

- Ensure that the processes and procedures concerning the fryers are suitable and that sufficient controls are in place for their safe operation and maintenance.
- Ensure that the risk assessment for the fryers and galley equipment is suitable and sufficient, and understood by all.
- Ensure that all the galley staff have been fully familiarised with all the galley equipment and fully understand the operation and risks for each.
- Ensure that all members of the galley team are regularly trained in emergency requirements.