

Near miss: dislodged grating with potential fall to sea

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A section of Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) grating on a vessel dislodged and dropped to sea.

What happened?

A section of Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) grating on a vessel dislodged and dropped to sea. The incident occurred when a welder was on the grating passing a welding hose connection to a level further up, during preparations for work activities. The welder arrested their fall on a support beam and recovered without assistance to a safe position. The failed grating section fell 5.5m to sea and was lost. The welder, who did not suffer any injuries, reported the near miss. Operations nearby were suspended to allow follow up investigation and for the worksite team to complete a full review and “Time Out for Safety”.

What went wrong?

- The securing clips provided, which should have held the gratings in place, were not spaced correctly nor fixed securely to the framework.
- Two of the securing clips were missed from the original installation design.
- No-one spotted that the grating section was installed with an overhang on one end. As the welder stepped on this area, the forces allowed for the grating to tip and fall to the sea.

What went right?

- The individual managed to catch himself and recovered to safety.
- The incident was reported, and the investigation conducted quickly, corrective actions taken immediately.

What can we learn?

The grating fastenings or fixings were not identified or included within the vessel planned maintenance system. There was no routine inspection or visual check of the dimensional fit or condition of the securing clips. Consequently, over the installation period the grating became insecure, without the change being detected.

Actions

Our Member took the following actions:

- Changes to planned maintenance system for grating and fixings, and amendment of safety checklists for area.
- Added grating to future DROPS surveys, particularly on areas where work on split levels occurs, where the risk of serious personal injury may occur from falls and where potential for significant dropped objects exists.
- Future grating design should follow good practice guidance for load capacity, fastenings and the avoidance of overhangs that may create a cantilever effect.
- Changes to grating should be pre-approved by vessel Captain or Chief Engineer, temporary or permanent modifications should not be performed without approvals.

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