

High potential near-miss during back loading

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A Member has reported a high potential near miss incident which occurred during the back loading of a crane boom section from an offshore installation.

What happened?

Although no injuries were sustained as a result of this incident, two members of the deck crew working on the main deck at this time could potentially have been fatally injured.

A platform supply vessel (PSV) was alongside an offshore installation back loading a section of a crane boom. The crane boom section was first landed on deck with no clearance from adjacent tote tanks. However, it was necessary for deck crew to pass between these tote tanks and the crane boom section to access the crane hook for unlatching. Therefore, the crane operator was asked to move the back loaded crane boom section towards the port side of the main deck to create a safe gap to allow the crew members clear access.

The crane operator moved the back loaded crane boom section 1-2m to port and asked the bridge whether the new position was satisfactory. The bridge then confirmed with the deck crew that this new position was acceptable for them and advised the crane operator accordingly. The crane wire was then slackened and the crew members started to pass between the back loaded crane boom section and the nearby tote tanks to unlatch the crane hook.

The crane operator then started to heave and raised the back loaded crane boom section by about 1m to approximately waist height whilst personnel were between the crane boom section and the tote tanks. There was very high potential for the two crew members to be crushed between the crane boom section and the tote tanks.

A warning was given on UHF radio to the crew members, who were already aware of the hazardous situation and were already moving to a safe position.

The crane operator then lowered the crane boom section to deck. Weather conditions at the time of the incident were within acceptable working limits, consisting of wind speed 19 knots and significant wave height of between 1.5 and 2.0m.

What were the causes?

Further investigation revealed that:

- The crane operator lifted the back loaded crane boom section off the deck but failed to effectively communicate his intention to the vessel personnel.
- The crane operator assumed that the deck was clear of personnel.

Lessons learnt

The following recommendations were made:

- Crane operators should:
 - Communicate their intentions to all relevant installation and vessel personnel before proceeding with any lifting operation.
 - Ensure that all communications are fully understood and verified by all relevant installation and vessel personnel before proceeding with any lifting operation.
 - Avoid making assumptions and verify that the deck area is clear of all personnel before proceeding with any lifting operation.

Members may also wish to review the following IMCA publications:

- [Guidelines for lifting operations](#)
- [Guidance on operational communications](#)

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