

Worker fell from height and suffered life changing injuries

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What happened?

A worker was paralysed from the waist down when he fell 3.4 metres to the bottom of a ship's hold.

A 28-year-old worker, a stevedore employed to unload a merchant vessel at Hull, UK, lost his footing and fell through an access ladder gap in the walkway.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls



What were the causes? What went wrong?

HSE investigation found that for the stevedores to inspect all the cargo from port to starboard it was custom and practice for them to step over an access ladder gap on the walkway to get to the other side. The stevedore made his way along the walkway and went to step over the gap. He was astride the gap, holding onto the guard rail, when his high-vis jacket got caught on an eyebolt on the rails. He took his hand off the rail and turned to free his jacket when he lost his footing and fell through the gap to the bottom of the hold.

The HSE inspector commented: *“Falls from height often result in life-changing or fatal injuries. In most cases, these incidents are needless and could be prevented by properly planning the work to ensure that effective preventative and protective measures are in place.”*

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