

Fire hydrants fitted with incorrect coupling size

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A member has reported an incident in which replacement fire hydrants were found to be fitted with incorrect coupling sizes, leading to them being incompatible with fire hose couplings. This would have severely impacted the firefighting capabilities of the vessel.

What happened?

The incident occurred following a number of earlier occasions in the previous five years in which fire hydrant valves in the accommodation had been found leaking. Replacement hydrants were ordered and fitted, but the couplings were found to be incompatible.

It was found that the coupling on the hydrant valve in the port side forward thruster room did not fit the adjacent fire hose coupling. The hose coupling measured 65mm and the hydrant coupling measured 80mm.





Photo 3



Findings

Our member's investigation revealed the following:

- The hydrant/hose coupling incompatibility was not followed up in a timely manner. Six days elapsed between the discovery of the incompatibility and a Hazard Observation being made.
- A total of thirty hydrant couplings were found with 80mm couplings fitted instead of 65mm couplings. Had there been a fire these thirty couplings (incompatible) on the fire hydrants would not have been serviceable.

- Firefighting capabilities were not entirely restricted as the outside accommodation fire hydrants on each deck were still pressurised and compatible with the fire hoses onboard and the shipboard accommodation sprinkler fire suppression system was available.

Lessons learnt

The lessons learnt:

- The need for vigilance and the importance of thorough inspections and correctly completing all checklists, including examination for missing or improperly installed components.
- Lack of attention/due care/poor work practice.
- Failure to identify incorrect fire hydrant valve couplings during installation of valves.
- The thirty incompatible fire hydrant valve couplings were fitted in May 2014 and this had not been spotted for many months, despite maintenance, safety inspections and drills.
- When incidents, near misses, issues or concerns are reported, they should be followed up in a timely manner.

Actions

Members may wish to check their own fire-fighting equipment, to carefully and thoroughly inspect all equipment when first received, and to ensure that during fire drills, hoses are properly run and connected to hydrants, including in the accommodation areas.

Members may wish to refer to the following similar incidents relating to incorrect fittings (search words: fitting, incorrect):

- Near-miss: Failure of gas quad fitting
- Injuries due to failure of diver's emergency gas cylinder

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