

Dropped object near-miss – Unsecured plastic box fell from load being lifted by mobile crane

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A member has reported an incident in which an unsecured plastic box detached from the load and fell to the bottom of the dry dock.

What happened?

The incident occurred when a vessel was on the fourth day of a fast-track dry docking to investigate and repair oil leaks (and possible damage) to the vessel azimuth thrusters. Additional maintenance tasks and repairs were being carried out at the same time.

Dockyard personnel were lifting a piston from one of the vessel's thrusters to the top of the dry dock, using their mobile crane. In order to contain residual oil remaining on the piston, the lifting team attached a plastic box to the piston. The piston was securely slung. However, the plastic box was insecurely slung, using pallet wrap. Wind speed was gusting to approximately 40mph. As the load reached the top of the dry dock (height 11-12m), a gust of wind blew the plastic box off the piston, which resulted in the plastic box falling back to the bottom of the dry dock. There was no one working on the floor of the dry dock where the box landed. There were no injuries and no damage.

Our member's investigation revealed the following:

- The job was promptly stopped by the banksman.
- There was insufficient oversight, management and control of dockyard personnel, particularly during lifting operations.
- Incorrect tools were used for the job.

A number of further factors were identified:

- The dry docking was unplanned and sudden or 'fast tracked'.
- There were adverse weather conditions which, in addition to being a contributory factor to this particular incident, nearly prevented the vessel getting in to dry dock which could have delayed the entire project.
- Forecasted adverse weather further affected the work schedule that day.
- Dockyard personnel used an incorrect tool (a plastic box) and an insecure method for attaching the box, in order to mitigate possible delays, believing the onset of more severe weather – possibly preventing the use of the crane -may have been imminent.
- In this case, the dropped objects prevention scheme (DROPS) calculator provides only an indication of possible outcomes. The box in question had a relatively large surface area which wind resistance would have slowed during descent. Notwithstanding this, it still had the potential to cause serious injury or

even a fatality.

Our member noted the following:

In a 'normally planned' dry docking, personnel visit dockyards, well in advance of the vessels, to ensure the dockyard is ready to receive the vessel and that systems and procedures, including those related to health and safety, are in place and in compliance with company requirements. However, it is of the greatest importance that even where a docking is 'fast-tracked' or unplanned and at very short notice, that all personnel, including dockyard personnel, follow safe working practices and procedures.

Our member took the following actions:

- Reiterated to all personnel that the vessel must have oversight of all lifts (including risk assessment, methods of work, times, locations, projected environmental conditions (wind, fog etc) even if vessel personnel have no direct involvement in the lift.
- Ensured that correct tools and lifting methods are always used, even where the vessel has no direct involvement in the lift.
- Reiterated to both crew and dockyard staff, during all dockings, that there is not only a right, but an obligation to 'stop the job' if they see anything that they think is unsafe.

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