

Chemical burns to body

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CHIRP Maritime, an industry charity facilitating confidential incident reporting from seafarers, has published its Annual Digest 2021.

Annual Digest 2021 includes a number of events and incidents of interest to IMCA members. The aim of CHIRP Maritime is to enhance maritime safety worldwide, by providing a totally independent confidential (not anonymous) reporting system for all individuals employed in or associated in the maritime industries. This incident is one of them.

What happened?

During maintenance work on a purifier, an engineer who had only recently joined the vessel was instructed to bring a specific chemical (carbon remover) from the chemical locker to clean the purifier. The engineer went into the chemical locker to transfer a quantity of the above-mentioned chemical from the drum to a small can. However, during this activity a quantity of the chemical liquid was spilt, resulting in a severe chemical burn.

First aid and medical treatment were provided and the engineer was landed ashore two days later when the ship reached port. The engineer was subsequently repatriated for further treatment.

What went wrong?

- The company's safety instructions which were posted at the entrance to the chemical locker were not reviewed or followed.
- Appropriate chemical personal protective equipment (which was also positioned at the locker entrance) was not used.
- There was complacency – “task seen as routine” – cleaning the purifier was a planned work activity that took place almost every day.
- The company's documented procedures directed that the appropriate Job Hazard Analysis be reviewed before starting work. However, the Job Hazard Analysis for this task did not require a toolbox meeting, nor was one carried out.
- Investigation determined that this chemical should not have been used for cleaning purifiers because a less hazardous alternative was available.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls

Lessons learned

- Avoid the temptation to take shortcuts by **not** wearing PPE for a job that is done regularly and which takes a very short time – don't fall for "it won't happen to me" syndrome.
- Ensure that familiarisation and training of new crew is thorough and comprehensive. Taking time to demonstrate how to do a job safely sets the safety culture for all crew to follow.
- A new joiner to a ship or company should be supervised for their own safety during their induction period. Ideally, the induction process should be formally documented and include a formal or informal assessment to check that they have learned, and can consistently apply, safety procedures to the required standard.
- **STOP the JOB:** ensure people feel confident and empowered to STOP THE JOB and challenge any apparent infringement of safety standards, and raise concerns if they discover even minor equipment defects. There may be cultural challenges to resolve in helping crew to be willing to STOP THE JOB.

IMCA Safety Flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing lessons to be more easily learnt for the benefit of the entire offshore industry.

The effectiveness of the IMCA Safety Flash system depends on the industry sharing information and so avoiding repeat incidents. Incidents are classified according to IOGP's Life Saving Rules.

All information is anonymised or sanitised, as appropriate, and warnings for graphic content included where possible.

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