

Prevention of accidents when mooring ships



Accidents that occur during ship mooring procedures can cause serious injury and even death, as well as give rise to serious claims.

Accidents may occur during the handling of mooring ropes by crew members or involve ropes that have broken or slipped from winch drums and ship's winches. Breaking of mooring lines commonly occurs during mooring, towing and ship-to-ship cargo transfer processes, with material failure, misuse of equipment and weather also playing a role. Injuries from unbroken ropes usually occur due to crew becoming entrapped in lines or lines slipping and jamming on winch drum ends during mooring operations. The majority of serious accidents in deck mooring areas involve mooring ropes breaking.

According to the International Safety Management Code, every ship should have a risk assessment of its mooring procedures and the company's policy on how these operations should be carried out and documented should be communicated to all crew.

Precautionary measures

As mentioned above, the majority of serious accidents during mooring involve ropes breaking. The Club's Loss Prevention department has come up with specific practices that could help prevent accidents.

Firstly, a risk assessment should be carried out before any mooring job, so that the crew is fully informed of what they are being asked to do and the potential hazards of it or the safety procedures that need to be followed.

Subsequently, mooring lines and machinery should be frequently checked and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Also, overtightening the winch brakes is likely to result in exceeding the breaking load of the mooring line.

Finally, all crew must be aware that the entire mooring deck is a "snap back area" during operations and for this reason, they should be away from the mooring lines when they are under tension.

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Given the significant injuries that can result from mooring line accidents, great emphasis should be placed on crew safety training, proper maintenance and inspection of mooring lines and equipment, and all the other methods discussed above .

Ship Security Assessments

The Loss Prevention department of the UK P&I Club carries out Ship Safety Assessments for its Members, based on whether the ship's mooring equipment meets the appropriate standards for the work being carried out. This includes inspection of equipment used during docking and mooring operations, review of certificates for ropes, cables and stoppers used and review of schedules in relation to inspection, maintenance and replacement of mooring equipment. Club staff conducting the risk assessment also consider whether key design factors are appropriate. Factors considered include, even if there is good visibility from the winch operator's position, use of anti-slip paint, marking of "snap-back areas" throughout the deck mooring area, use of liquid collection containers around all hydraulic winches, adequate lighting at night but also suitable netting around gangways and winches.