

Marine Safety Forum – Safety Flash 10/23

Issued: 9th August 2010

Subject: High Potential Incident Following Failure of Home Made Equipment

A supply vessel was instructed to return to port due to poor weather conditions at the field. The Captain instructed the deck crew to ensure the containers on deck were adequately secured using chain lashings. The chain lashings were put in place and the decision taken by the deck crew to use the tugger winch to tighten the lashings. When the tugger was tensioned up the chain lashing parted and a piece of flying debris struck and broke the bridge centre aft window. The investigation found that a home chain connection (a piece of chain welded to a stainless steel shackle) had at some stage been introduced into the cargo lashing system. This was probably done so the tugger wire hook could be quickly connected. Being home made it was not certificated and there was no way of knowing its breaking load. We do not like the expression but this was an accident waiting to happen. The deck crew are extremely fortunate not to have been killed or seriously injured.



Lessons learned:

- The main and overriding lesson from this incident is that home made equipment or tools can never be tested or certified appropriately and often fail sometimes with serious effects. They should never be made or used;
- Home made tools are often made for expediency. However almost always a proper tool or piece of equipment can be sourced from an appropriate supplier. In this case the ship could have requested an enlarged link and connector;
- When using a winch all parts of system being used (shackles, chains, wires, slings, etc.) must have a breaking load higher than the force the winch can exert and certificates to prove it;