

Marine Safety Forum – Safety Flash 08-21

Issued: 18th May 2008

Subject: Serious Accident to Second Engineer

A Second Engineer was taking a water sample from the air cooler radiator of an air compressor. He was closing the drain sample point using a spanner held in his left hand and had his right hand on the cooling fan guard at a point where there was a gap in the guard. At that moment the compressor started on auto start. Unfortunately he lost the 3 middle fingers of his right hand.

Lessons learned:

- The guard was not complete around the cooling fan as a small segment had been left for maintenance purposes. This does not appear to have been recognised as a hazard before this accident. Ships management and external inspectors should ensure a critical look is taken at work places during area inspections to identify such hazards.
- The sample drain under the radiator pointed towards the compressor when it could easily have been turned 180 degrees so it could be accessed from a safer position in front of the radiator.
- The isolation of this compressor was not consistently done when water samples were taken on a routine basis. There was no risk assessment or job card to highlight isolation during water sampling.
- It might also be considered that isolating machinery in such a case should be standard engineering practice.
- Chief Engineers should satisfy themselves that the correct level of supervision is in place for all tasks in machinery spaces.
- Routine tasks should receive proper care and attention. Where formal risk assessments are not considered necessary it may be prudent to develop work routines or job cards which state the controls which are required. The Step Change in Safety "Task Risk Assessment Guide" contains useful advice on this.

Unguarded section
of fan

Water sample
drain point

