

# Safety Alert

**Number: 25-06**

**Published: 10/04/2025**

**Subject: Confined Space Incident**

## What Happened / Narrative

Whilst moored at the quayside a fishing vessels engineer found water in a cargo hold. The engineer attempted to use the bilge pump to remove the water but found a problem with the suction. It was thought that either the suction pipe in the hold well had a hole or the pipe end strainer might be blocked, the engineer reported the issue to the Master.

As this had happened in the past the Master instructed the engineer and one deckhand to set up the petrol driven salvage pump and drain the hold well to find the issue, reminding the engineer not to use the petrol driven salvage pump within the hold.

The master left the engineer and deckhand to undertake the works and with the cook the Master left the vessel to pick up groceries.

On returning to the vessel the Master discovered the engineer, and deckhand had taken the salvage pump into the hold and both were found unconscious. The Master immediately called the emergency services for assistance, while on the call unknow to the Master the cook entered the hold to help his colleagues, and he too became unconscious.

The emergency services were quickly on the scene and recovered the crew members. One crewman was taken to hospital for treatment while the other two were treated in the ambulance on quayside.

All crewmembers made a full recovery.



## Why Did it Happen / Cause

- Although instructed not to, the engineer operated the petrol driven salvage pump within the hold.
- There were no written procedures for using the salvage pump.
- Crew was unaware of danger of using a petrol driven pump in an enclosed space.
- There was no procedure for enclosed space entry / working.

## Corrective Actions Taken / Recommendations

The following points are being with the fishing vessel and lessons learned shared:

- Ensure crews are aware of the dangers of confined spaces
- Enclosed space entry procedures to be implemented
- Enclosed space rescue drills to be implemented
- Hazards associated with petrol / diesel driven pumps in enclosed spaces to be shared
- Adequate and regular maintenance of bilge pumping arrangements to be in place

*The information contained within this Safety Alert and the associated MSF web site is provided in good faith for the benefit of our members and does not constitute and is not intended to constitute professional advice or any form of formal representation on behalf of any MSF member or officer. The text as provided by submitting organisations may be amended to ensure that it is brief, informative and readable but will as far as reasonably practicable remain as per the intent of the original submission. For the avoidance of doubt, no liability whatsoever shall be attached to any guidance, recommendation or statement contained therein. Contents should be reviewed individually by recipients who will determine relevance to their own operations.*