

Safety Alert

Number: 25-07

Published: 15/04/2025

Subject: Crew Member Overboard Incident

What Happened / Narrative

During the routine retrieval of scallop gear on a fishing vessel a crew member fell overboard.

The crew member had been standing forward waiting for the scallop gear to come alongside to attach a safety hook, a task that they had carried out numerous times. When the gear came alongside the crew members foot slipped, he lost balance and fell overboard.

The skipper immediately stopped the vessel and threw a life buoy over the side, which the crew member caught. The other crew swung the crane around, pulled slack cable off the winch and passed it over to the crew member in the water. The crew member attached the cable to himself and was raised out of water and taken onboard.

Vessel returned to port where the crew member was taken to the local hospital for checks and subsequently released.

Key Findings

- Complacency of doing the same task led to crew member not being aware of his surroundings
- As a result of routinely carrying out drills the crew knew how to react when the incident occurred
- Crew wear a personnel flotation device (PFD) whilst working on deck which kept the crew member afloat

Corrective Actions Taken / Recommendations

The following actions and recommendations were followed up with the vessel and lessons learned shared:

- Dangers of complacency and incorrect positioning for the task highlighted and discussed
- Safety inductions to be in place for all new crew members
- Pre departure safety toolbox talks to be conducted
- Importance of routinely carrying out safety drills to be emphasised
- Ensure PFDs' are available for crew, are of the correct type, within service date and correctly fitted

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.