

Casualty Circular No. 25 of 2009

(Regulatory/Guidance/Information)

NO:11-NT(02)/2008

Dated: 17.08.2009

Subject: Death of Master on Oil Tanker

NARRATIVE

An Indian flag oil tanker, built in 1983, GRT-4473, sailed from an Indian port in ballast condition under the command of Senior Master, age 53 years (approx.) on 01.01.2008 for another port in the west coast of India. The vessel arrived at the outer anchorage of the destined port on 04.01.2008 at 0255 hrs. Upon arrival, vessel dropped her anchor and waited for further instructions for berthing. At about 1900 hrs. on 05.01.2008, a mess boy informed the Chief Officer that the Master was not responding to his call. The Senior officer of the ship also noted that the body temperature of the Master was below normal. They tried to revive him by administering all possible First Aid but all efforts proved futile. This matter was immediately brought to the notice of the owner and the Port Authority. The vessel weighed her anchor and shifted to inner anchorage at 2306 hrs. The Port Health Officer boarded the vessel and declared the Master dead at 0005 hrs. on 06.01.2008. His body was sent for postmortem.

OBSERVATIONS/ANALYSES

- The postmortem report confirmed that the death could have happened about 3 to 4 hours after his last meal.
- The Master was in the habit of drinking habit and not mingling with ship's crew.
- Since departure from the last port he was reported to be drinking heavily.
- The Master looking more than his age and his physical appearance was deteriorating since he joined the ship.
- Atmosphere on board was reported to be congenial and conducive thus ruling out the possibility of any foul play. No suicide note was found on board, hence the possibility of committing suicide may also not be present.
- Postmortem report indicated the cause of death attributed to Cardio Respiratory Failure.
- Local police gave clearance to the vessel after completion of the investigation and no case was registered with any one.

RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNT

- The approved Medical Examiner should conduct stringent medical examination of Senior Officers, who are 40 years of age and above to verify their physical, mental and emotional state of health.
- The PSC/FSC Authorities should verify the physical/mental state on board especially by Senior officers/crew members under the provision of ILO 147
- The company's Drug Alcohol Policy should be strictly adhered to
- Stringent reform/punitive measures against the defaulting crew should be initiated by the company
- The Company or the ship's staff should immediately bring such cases to the knowledge of Flag Administration so that Preventive / corrective steps are taken urgently
- The Flag Administration should enact the provisions of Drug & Alcohol Policy into its National law.

Sd/-

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