

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY

EUROVOYAGER:

MAJOR INJURY TO A FITTER TRAPPED IN A WATERTIGHT DOOR 3 NOVEMBER 2008



While the passenger ferry *Eurovoyager* was en-route to Ramsgate, UK, from Ostend, Belgium, an engine fitter was trapped for almost 4 minutes in a hydraulically operated steel watertight door in the engine room. He sustained major crush injuries and was airlifted to a London hospital shortly after the ferry arrived in Ramsgate.

A Belgian Maritime Inspectorate surveyor was on board carrying out an in-service inspection. Although it was the onboard practice to keep the watertight doors in 'local' control when at sea, the master switched the doors to the 'remote' or 'doors closed' mode when leaving Ostend to ensure that none could be left open during the inspection. The master informed the crew of this action.

Following the accident, tests on the doors highlighted that the watertight door in which the fitter was trapped, closed in 7 seconds. VDR data showed that many of the crew did not fully open the watertight doors when passing through. It also showed that when the watertight doors were operating in local control, a number of frequently used doors were left open when the ferry was on passage.

Power operated watertight doors are essential to the safety of many vessels but, unfortunately, they also pose a considerable danger to seafarers and shore workers; a number of whom have died or have been seriously injured in recent years.

Safety Issues:

- The fitter did not follow the recommended procedure for passing through the watertight door. Unfortunately, this procedure is often regarded as unnecessary and time consuming, and the taking of short-cuts is a frequent occurrence. **Controlling or modifying human behaviour is a difficult managerial challenge, which requires a commitment to safety, and the effective use of education, training, monitoring and enforcement.**
- The closure rate of the watertight door was almost three times as fast as allowed by current SOLAS regulations. **Watertight doors closure rates should be periodically checked, particularly on older vessels, to ensure that crew are not exposed to unnecessary risk.**
- There was very little signage by the door advising the crew of its safe operation, and the labelling on the door control panel on the bridge was potentially confusing. **Notices and posters showing the correct transit procedures to be followed and the dangers and consequences of entrapment, serve as timely reminders before passing through a watertight door. The labelling on any control panel should be clear and unambiguous.**
- The watertight doors were in 'remote' mode and therefore closed automatically. **Watertight doors are potentially far more dangerous when operated in 'remote' mode and, it is important that this mode is only selected in an emergency or during tests and drills, as required by SOLAS.**
- The decision to place the watertight doors in 'remote' mode was influenced by the crew's lack of discipline in closing the doors when at sea. **The sinking of the Greek ferry, *Express Samina*, with the loss of 82 lives, clearly shows why watertight doors must be closed at sea. Every effort must be made to ensure this is achieved.**
- The data recovered from the vessel's VDR provided an invaluable insight into the operation of the vessel's watertight doors by her crew. **Although intended as an aid to accident investigation, VDRs are already being used by forward looking ship managers to help monitor performance and procedures on board their vessels.**

This accident was the subject of an MAIB Investigation, which can be found on MAIB's website at: www.maib.gov.uk

A copy of the report and/or the flyer will be sent, on request, free of charge.

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