

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE TOWING AND WORKBOAT INDUSTRY

LLANDDWYN ISLAND:

PARTING OF A HAWSER RESULTING IN A FATALITY

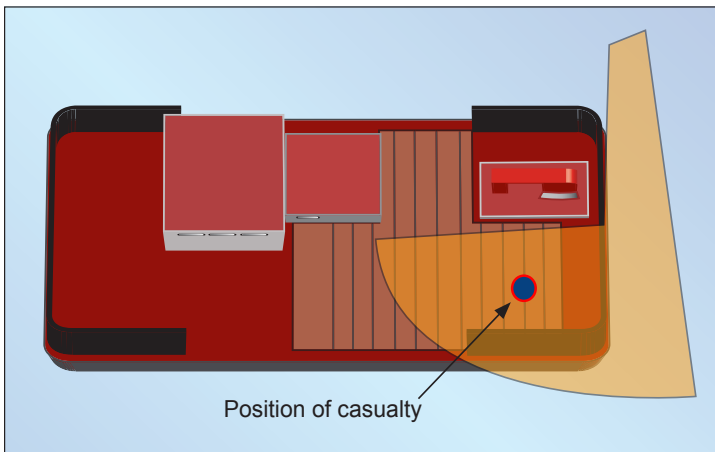
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Llanddwyn Island

The 21.5m workboat, *Llanddwyn Island*, was assisting an 870t backhoe dredger into position, when the single hawser connecting the vessels suddenly parted under tension. As the hawser recoiled, it struck the deckhand who had entered the 'snap-back' zone. The deckhand died at the scene.

A 13mm steel chain sling, used to connect a rope stretcher to the dredger, had failed. It had been passed through a pad eye on the dredger's stern and then doubled-up and re-connected to the rope stretcher by a shackle. No thimbles were used in the hawser and the safe working load of many components, including the chain, was not known. Prior to the accident, the workboat's skipper did not hear a call from the backhoe operator informing him that the dredger was in position and that he was lowering the spud legs. The deckhand had not been told that it was safe to approach the tensioned hawser.



SAFETY LESSONS

- **The deckhand was in the ‘snap-back’ zone when the hawser parted.** When a line is under tension or can tension without warning, it is dangerous to enter its ‘snap-back’ zone. Where it is impractical to mark ‘snap-back’ zones on decks, extra vigilance is required and anybody seeing another crewman approaching an area of potential recoil should not hesitate to warn the person concerned.
- **The hawser was not made up in accordance with industry best practice.** When selecting equipment for use in a hawser, it is prudent to make use of the guidance available, and careful consideration should be given to the loads that the hawser may be subjected to and the properties of the loose towing gear available.
- **The doubled-up chain did not double its breaking strain.** The loads acting on the centre link of a chain when doubled round a single point can reduce the overall strength of the chain depending on the dimensions of the equipment used.
- **The chain was not part of the workboat’s loose gear and was uncertificated.** Loose towing gear acquired in service might ‘come in handy’ but its use can be dangerous. Only gear which is accompanied by appropriate certificates and has been checked regularly can be used with confidence.
- **The communications between all parties was ineffective.** Good communication is vital if an operation is to be completed safely. A discussion or briefing before each operation makes everyone aware of the procedures to follow and of the risks involved.

The limitations of the training and qualifications required to operate workboats have been recognised by the National Workboat Association and the British Tugowners Association. In conjunction with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, these bodies are developing three towing endorsements for tug and workboat crews: general towage, sea towage and ship assist.

This flyer and the MAIB’s investigation report are posted on our website:
www.maib.gov.uk

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