ACCIDENTS WHILE USING JACOB'S LADDER ON BOARD

As everyone -who is somehow interested in marine life- is well aware, working on board vessel is one of the most demanding working environments, and due to the same, various risks that threaten the health and safety of seamen do exist on board.

Such dangers can be originated from various external elements, varying from weather conditions to piracy attack etc. Apart, accidents may also be encountered in the daily working routine on board. Among these, the accidents during working aloft, particularly while using jacob's ladder are quite common.

In brief, three types of jacob's ladders exist; namely pilot ladders, embarkation ladders for life rafts during abandoning the vessel and jacob's ladders using by crew member for daily routine work on board. The manufacture, design and use of pilot ladders and embarkation ladders are standardized as specified in the relevant chapters of SOLAS[1] and in the relevant IMO resolution[2].

As for the jacob's ladders, these are made of sisal ropes and wooden rungs having no any specific official standard like pilot ladders. They are most commonly used to read draught marks during draught surveys and sometimes practically to board smaller boats (such as fuel barges, various supply boats, etc.) while alongside the main vessel. Jacob's ladders are preferred as they are lighter and easy to carry (average weight of a pilot ladder is approx. 88 kg whilst jabob's ladder is around 17 kg.) than the pilot ladders, although latter is much more safer.

Precautions To Be Taken:

During the first quarter of year 2022, many seamen with various nationalities, including Turkish seafarers were unfortunately either injured or lost their lives due to such accidents. On this opportunity, we would like to make mention of some measures that can be easily taken to prevent similar accidents.

The rules those must be obeyed in order to ensure the health and safety of the seafarers in the working environments on ships and to prevent

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accidents are detailed in MLC 2006[3] and the respective ILO's code of practice[4]. The remarkable points to be considered during working aloft and particularly whilst working with jacob's ladder are as follows;

- A risk assessment should be conducted as per company's Safety Management System
- A work permit should be obtained.
- Personal protecting equipment should be worn before starting the work with jacob's ladder. Full body harness with lifeline or retractable fall arrest blocks are quite useful to maintain safety during use of jacob's ladder.
- Likewise, life vest or other personal flotation device should be worn.
- Another crew member should be present to supervise and assist as needed.
- A lifebuoy with a safety line should be readily available.

Consequently, we are of the opinion that taking the aforementioned precautions as well as complying with additional company procedures shall be beneficial both in preventing injuries and loss of life caused by such accidents and in minimizing insurance costs for the owners arising from these accidents.

1 SOLAS Regulation Ch. V Reg. 23 Pilot Transfer Arrangements

2 IMO Res. A.1045(27)

3 MLC 2006 Regulation 4.3 – Health, Safety Protection and Accident Prevention Requirements

4 Accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port. An ILO Code of Practice Geneva, International Labour Office, 2nd edition, 1996