



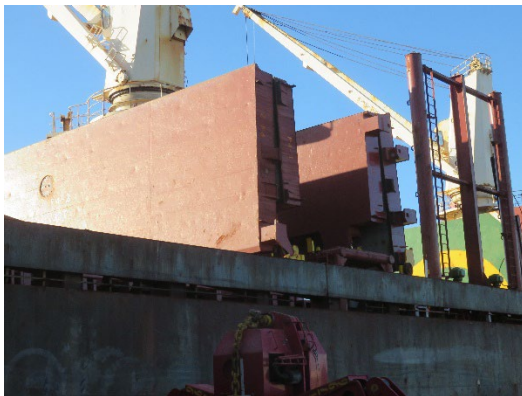
Marine Notice 04/2022

Safe handling of hatch covers

This marine notice aims to raise awareness of the importance of the safe operation and maintenance of hatch covers and related equipment on board vessels.

AMSA has received reports of serious incidents, including fatalities, involving hatch covers on board ships.

During inspections, AMSA continue to identify deficiencies in hatch covers, mostly as a result of lack of maintenance or improper operation. Some of these include unsafe securing – or no securing at all – of hatch covers, whilst the hatch covers are either partly or fully opened. The common finding in these situations is not following manufacturer's instructions during operations. Additionally, defects pertaining to poor maintenance of hydraulic systems that are critical to hatch cover operation have also been identified.



The International Safety Management Code (ISM Code)

The ISM Code sets out safety objective requirements for safety management systems (SMS).

On vessels fitted with hatch covers the SMS should include:

- a risk assessment for opening and closing hatch covers and working in cargo holds;
- instructions and procedures to ensure the safe operation of hatch covers and

associated equipment; and

- defined levels of authority and lines of communication between shipboard personnel when such operations are being undertaken.

Training and instructions to seafarers

Seafarers must be trained and provided with instructions for safe operations and maintenance of hatch covers. Training should include instruction in the correct operation of the specific type of hatch covers on the vessel; the risks posed by incorrect operation of the hatch covers; and maintenance of the hatch covers in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines.

Safe work practices should be always emphasized including:

- Ensuring hatch covers are secured at all times, whether in an open or closed position, unless they are being operated;
- Keeping personnel clear of moving or pressurized machinery; and
- Safe working at height practices when working near an open hatch cover.

Communication

Communication among seafarers is important for safe hatch cover operation. Co-ordination between vessels' crew and ensuring there is a culture onboard for crew to speak up when they see something unsafe, can help prevent these types of serious incidents.

Reporting

All incidents must be reported to AMSA at reports@amsa.gov.au. See AMSA's website for more information on how to submit an [incident report](#).

Further reading

[Risk Focus: Hatch Covers \(nautinst.org\)](#)

Mick Kinley
Chief Executive Officer
21 February 2022