

MARINE SAFETY INVESTIGATION UNIT

MSIU SAFETY ALERT 01/2013

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This safety alert is not written, in terms of content and style, with litigation in mind and pursuant to Regulation 14(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident and Incident Safety Investigation) Regulations 2011, shall in no case create a presumption of blame or liability. To this effect, this safety alert shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

The sole purpose of this safety alert is confined to the promulgation of safety information and therefore may be misleading if used for other purposes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Ghirxi', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Kevin Ghirxi
Head of Marine Safety Investigation

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Failure of lifeboat wire fall due to corrosion that resulted in five fatalities on the Maltese registered passenger vessel *Thomson Majesty*



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BACKGROUND

On 10 February 2013, the Maltese registered passenger vessel *Thomson Majesty* was berthed port side alongside in Santa Cruz de La Palma.

At about 1030, the ship commenced a General Emergency and Life Boat Drill for all crew members. Three lifeboats on the outboard side were to be lowered to the water and sent away for training purposes. During the recovery and hoisting of no. 9 lifeboat, the forward wire fall parted causing the boat to swivel on the aft hook. As the boat reached an angle of approximately 45° to the horizontal, the aft end of the boat and the hook failed and the boat dropped approximately 20 metres to the sea, turning upside down as it entered the water.



Forward Davit Arm Showing Parted Wire

Eight deck and technical crew members were on board no. 9 lifeboat at the time of the accident, some of whom were carrying out familiarisation training rather than being the assigned boat crew. One crew member was thrown from the boat as it entered the water, and two crew members managed to escape from the upturned boat by their own efforts. The remaining five crew members were subsequently declared deceased at the scene.

INITIAL FINDINGS

The wire rope had parted approximately where it rested over the topmost sheave, when the davit was in a stowed position. The fore and aft davit's falls were replaced on 22 August 2010 and the next scheduled replacement was August 2014. The launching appliance had been dynamically tested in May 2012.

Initial results of the tests carried out on the parted ends of the wire indicate significant corrosion damage to the inner strands of the wire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation is still open and the full safety investigation report will be made publically available on completion. Meanwhile, all owners and masters should be on the alert of the potential hazards related to fall wire failure and:

- Ensure that the falls are continuously well lubricated with an approved type of grease, particularly those areas that are difficult to inspect, where the falls pass through and around sheaves.
- Inspect regularly, frequently and thoroughly all visible parts of wire falls in order to detect general deterioration and deformation, including corrosion, abrasion, and mechanical damage.
- Review the contents of [MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1](#) (Measures to Prevent Accidents with Lifeboats) and act accordingly.