Phase 8 - Focussed Inspection Campaign on Lifeboats

Summary

An FIC was conducted by AMSA Surveyors from May to July 2005. These inspections were conducted in conjunction with regular PSC inspections.

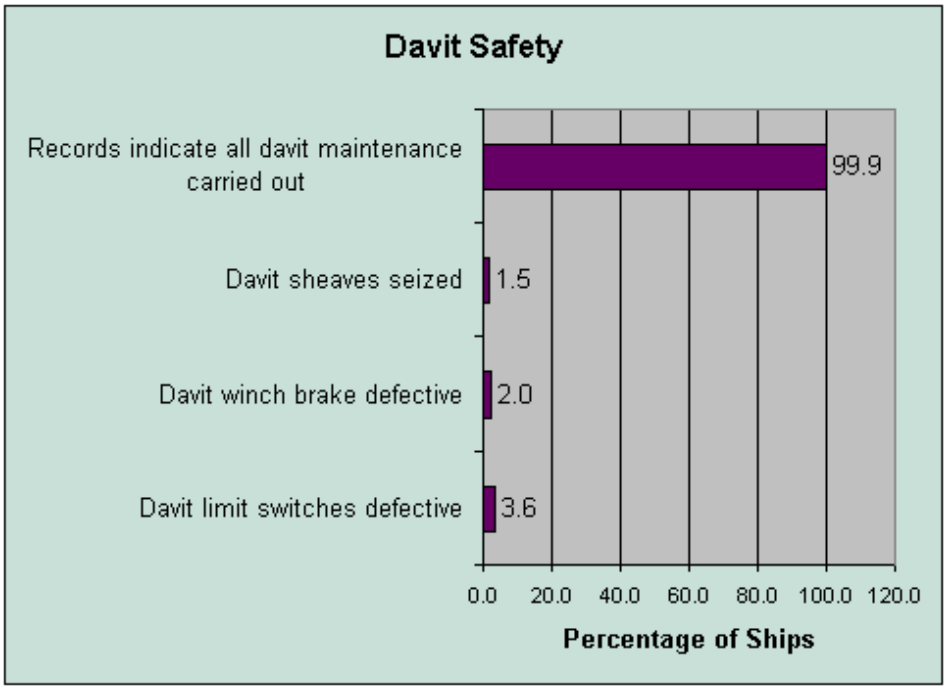
The aim of the campaign was to improve safety of lifeboat operations; particularly associated with on-load release equipment; and to raise awareness of recent IMO Circulars on the subject.

718 ships were inspected during the campaign and 320 deficiencies related to lifeboats, their operation and maintenance issued. 10 of these deficiencies were detainable resulting in 6 ships being detained.

Detailed Results

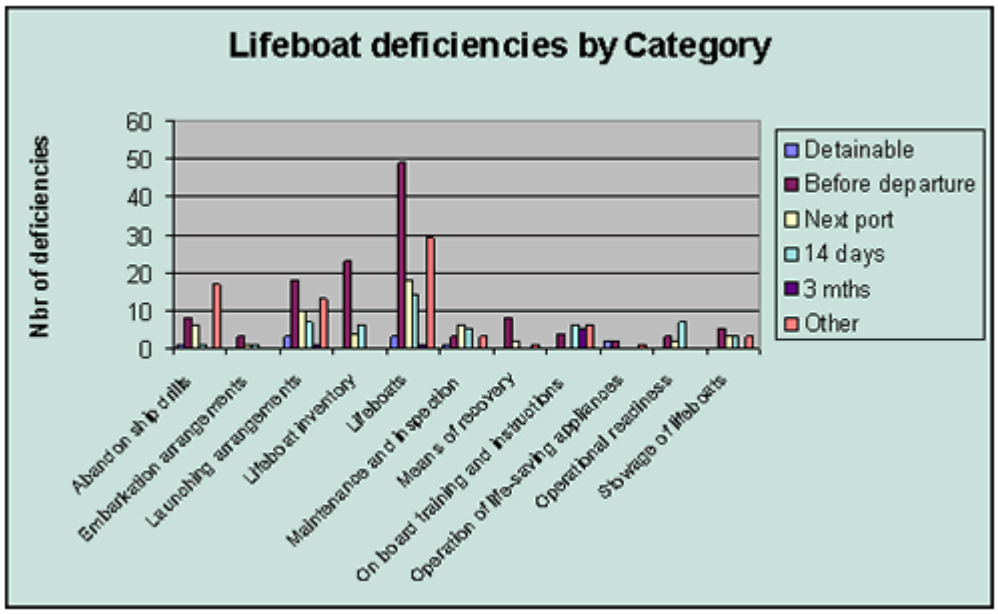
Condition of Davits

Questions were asked and tests carried out to assess the condition of lifeboat davits. Although in 99.85% of cases records indicated that the davits were maintained and in good condition as per the ship ISM system requirements, a significant number were still found to have significant defects. 22 ships had defective davit limit switches while 12 ships had defective davit winch brakes – such defects have caused serious accidents in the past.



Condition of Lifeboats

Particular attention was paid to the attachments of the lifeboat lifting hooks to the boat structure. In 8 cases (1.2% of ships where this was applicable) these attachments were found to be in unsatisfactory condition; generally due to corrosion. In total, 147 deficiencies were found with lifeboats and their inventories including cracks in the hull, defects with seating arrangements, propulsion defects, equipment broken or missing and problems with lifeboat fall releases where fitted. Detainable deficiencies were found with lifeboat releases (3), launching arrangements (3), operational issues (3) and maintenance (1). The following graph shows the deficiencies found by category and action taken.



On-Load Releases

As many lifeboat accidents have been reported as involving the on-load release mechanism, the maintenance and operation of this equipment was a major part of this campaign.

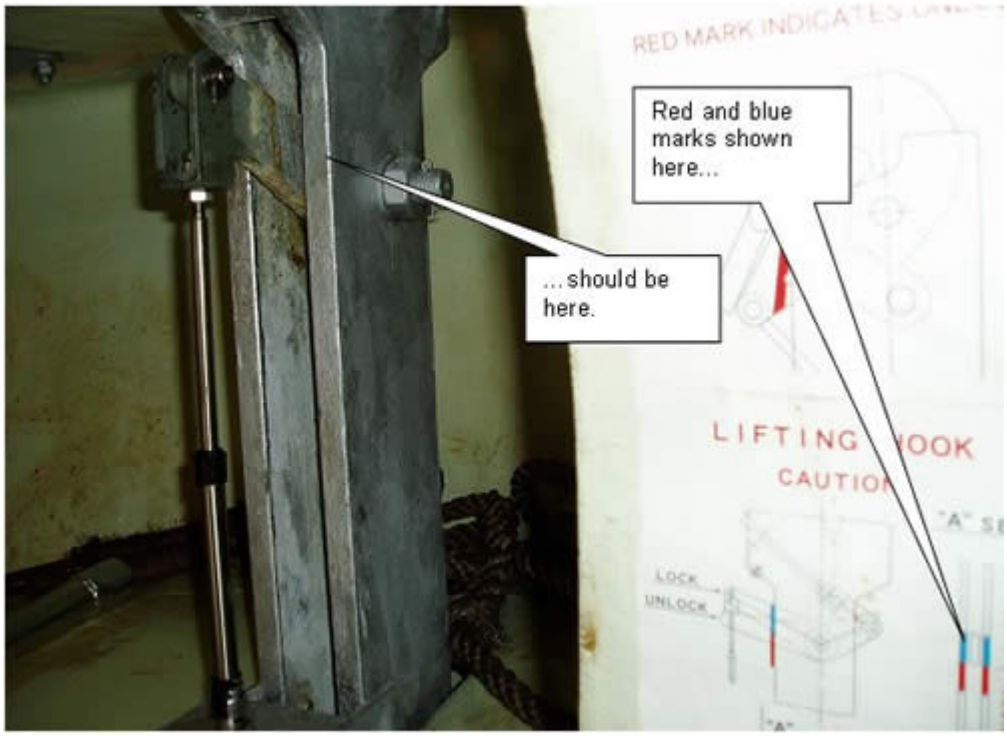
Of the 485 ships inspected with lifeboats with on-load releases fitted:

- 33 (6.8%) cases were found where records did not indicate this equipment had been tested and maintained properly.
- 11 (2.3%) cases were found where ships crew could not demonstrate an understanding of the operation of this equipment
- 21 (4.3%) ships were not provided with clear operating instructions and warning signs (as required by SOLAS and the LSA Code)
- 26 (5.4%) ships were found where the mechanism was not in a condition where crew members could clearly observe when the release mechanism was reset (as required by SOLAS and the LSA Code)
- 9 (1.9%) ships were found where the release mechanism was not clearly marked in a colour that contrasted with its surroundings (as required by SOLAS and the LSA Code)
- 8 (1.6%) ships were found where the AMSA surveyor felt that the operation of the mechanism did not require a “deliberate and sustained” action (as required by SOLAS and the LSA Code)

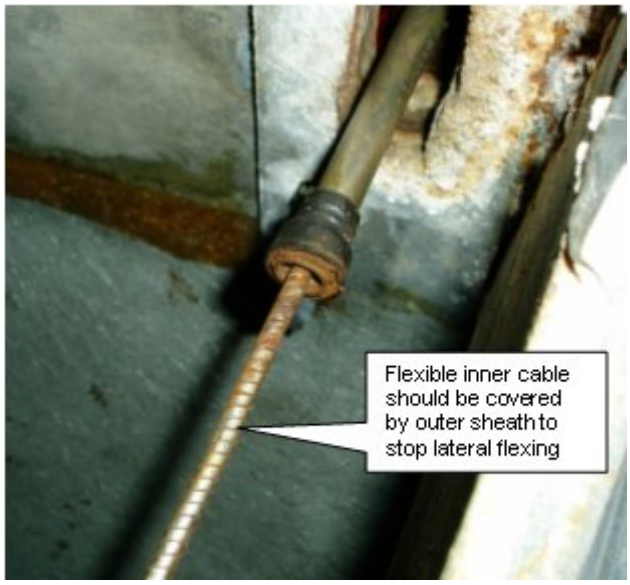
These results are particularly worrying as all of these factors could contribute to potentially fatal accidents.

Some examples of specific problems found are given here:

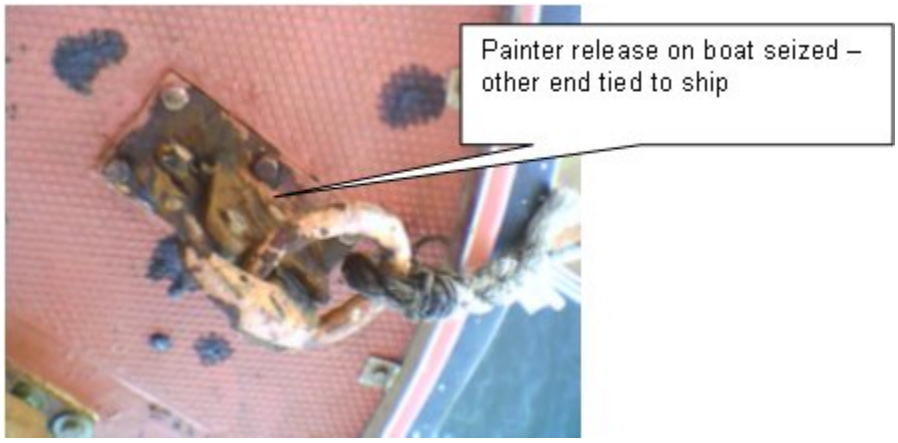
1. Example where crew had painted over the red and blue “locked/unlocked” marks on the release mechanism.

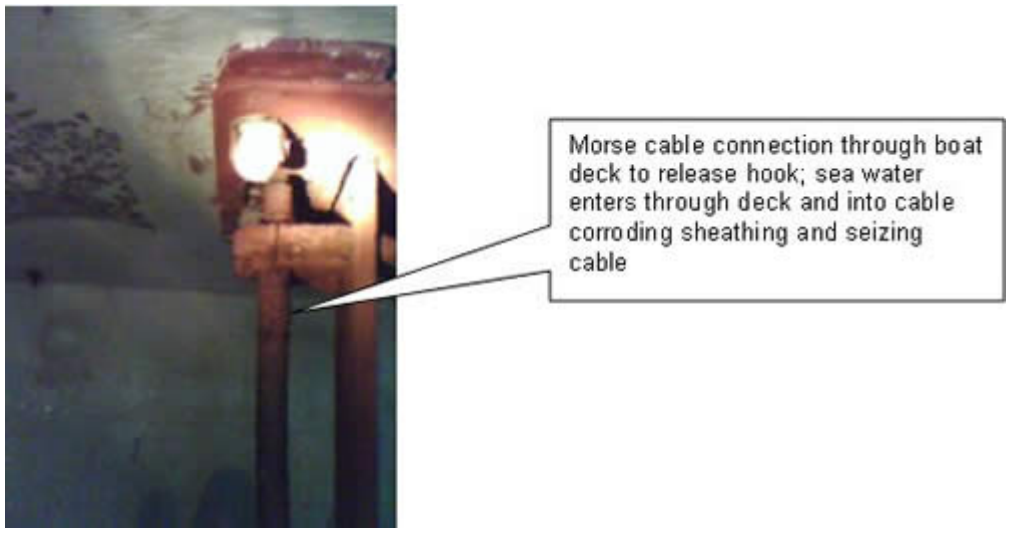


2. Morse Cable corroded and outer sheath detached leaving flexible core of cable holding mechanism in place.



3. Release mechanism (on falls and painter) seized and morse cable corroded





To attempt to improve the safety of on-load releases and lifeboats in general, the IMO issued circular MSC/Circ.1093 “Guidelines for periodic servicing and maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and on-load release gear” in June 2003. On 65 ships inspected where these guidelines had some application it was found that they had not been implemented

General Safety

The IMO in response to concerns about accidents with lifeboats issued circular MSC/Circ.1136 “Guidance on safety during abandon ship drills with lifeboats” in December 2004. One of the aims of the campaign was to raise awareness of this circular and the advice it contained. Alarmingly, **102** (16% of those where the circular was applicable) ships were not aware of this circular. Subsequently, on **84** ships no steps had been taken to identify the hazards associated with lifeboat drills or modify procedures to take account of any such hazards. In **20** cases it was felt that key personnel were not familiar with the procedures that *were* laid down in the ship’s existing safety management system.