

## SYNOPSIS

On 23 September 2008, the chief officer and the chief engineer of the container vessel *Maersk Kithira* were seriously injured when they were struck by a wave as the vessel proceeded in heavy weather conditions in the South China Sea. The chief engineer subsequently died of his injuries.

The two officers went onto the forecastle deck to secure a leaking stores hatch and loose anchor securing chain following activation of a bilge alarm.

Although some measures were taken to reduce the risk to the men before they went onto the exposed forecastle deck, ship's staff did not fully appreciate the risk of large waves breaking over the decks in the prevailing conditions, and insufficient information was available on board the vessel to enable them to make a full risk assessment before embarking on the operation.

Subsequent to the accident, the ship's manager has provided its crews with enhanced training on risk assessment, improved its internal auditing procedures, and has amended its risk assessment relating to the movement of personnel on exposed decks in heavy weather.

A recommendation has been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) which seeks to establish more comprehensive advice, including practical guidance on the likely incidence of large waves, that should be considered whenever seafarers need to access open decks in conditions of heavy weather.

The manager of *Maersk Kithira* has been recommended to make improvements to its safety management system relating to its procedures for maintaining watertight integrity.