

## SYNOPSIS



The 14m fishing vessel *Sian Elizabeth* departed from the Fisher Fleet in Kings Lynn at 1100 on 14 September 2006 in fine weather, having landed the previous catch. The vessel sailed, with three crew on board, to return to the cockle beds west of Hunstanton.

A 17 year old, untrained crewman had joined *Sian Elizabeth* the previous day, this being his first job since leaving school.

Shortly after the start of dredging, the untrained crewman started to clear the cockles from the chute into the hold as he had the previous day. As he was scraping the cockles down the chute with his right hand, he placed his left hand on the riddle frame assuming there was enough space to grip between the supporting frame and the rotating drum.

The unguarded riddle construction formed a shear trap that caught the crewman's left thumb and pulled his left arm into the riddle, causing serious injury.

The investigation found that:

- The construction and location of the riddle created a significant shear trap risk to crew routinely working in close proximity to the unguarded machinery.
- The risk of personal injury from routine working close to the riddle had not been effectively assessed.
- The specific requirement to assess the risk to young persons working on board *Sian Elizabeth* was not considered by either the owner or the skipper.
- The owner's delegation of responsibility for his vessels to individual skippers did not ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Safety of Small Fishing Vessels.
- The skipper and crew had not attended the required short training courses for fishermen. The skipper was not aware of the obligation of the inexperienced crew to attend a Basic Sea Survival course prior to starting his first job as a fisherman.
- The skipper took on a new crewman who was unfamiliar with the risks faced on board a small fishing vessel.
- The owner and skipper were unaware of the regulations governing employment of young persons.
- The familiarization provided to the new crewman was not sufficient to prevent the accident; he received no effective guidance on safe working prior to, or during, his time on board.
- The vessel did not comply with the Code. The deficiencies identified on board *Sian Elizabeth* during the MAIB investigation showed that a risk assessment had not been completed, annual self certification of the vessel had not been carried out, and the crew had not completed the required training.

**John Lake (Shellfish) Limited** is recommended to:

- Comply with the requirements of the Code, and specifically:
  - Complete, or arrange completion of, an assessment of the health and safety risks arising in the normal course of work activities or duties of the vessel.
  - Certify annual compliance with the Code, by declaring that the safety equipment has been properly maintained and surveyed and that up to date health and safety risk assessment has been completed.
- Ensure all skippers and crew are trained as required by statute.
- Ensure that young persons are familiarised, trained and assessed with consideration given to their age prior to working on board.
- Ensure that the riddle arrangement on board *Sian Elizabeth* complies with The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Provision and Use of Work Equipment) Regulations (PUWER) 2006.

**The Maritime and Coastguard Agency** is recommended to:

- Ensure the effective inspection and survey of under 15m fishing vessels to ensure compliance with the Code.
- Verify that fishing vessel owners are compliant with The Merchant Shipping and Fishing vessels (Health and Safety at Work) (Employment of Young Persons) Regulations 1998.
- Implement The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Provision and Use of Work Equipment) Regulations 2006 and amalgamate the provisions of the regulations into guidance for fishing vessel inspectors and surveyors.