

SYNOPSIS

On 10 November 1999 the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was notified of an incident on board *P&OSL Aquitaine* on 29 October. Following receipt of further information, an investigation began on 23 December 1999.

The vessel was in Falmouth dry-dock, undergoing a refit. Work involved removing the separate tricing pendant and bowsing tackles from the lifeboats, and replacing them with lighter, combined tricing/bowsing gear. The lengths of these were adjusted by slackening and then re-tightening the clamps on a short length of wire rope, which was part of the bowsing gear.

As No 4 lifeboat was lowered, the clamping arrangement on the forward bowsing gear slipped, which allowed the forward end of the boat to swing out of control. Two crewmen were in the forward end of the boat. They were each wearing safety harnesses, and were unhurt.

Wire clamp manufacturers offer guidance on the precautions necessary to ensure that clamped wires maintain their ability to carry loads. However, these precautions are difficult to follow on board vessels in service, making it undesirable to use these clamps on load bearing parts of lifesaving appliances (LSA).

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) offers no guidance on using clamped wire rope fittings. The MAIB recommends that the MCA issues clear and explicit guidance in its instructions to surveyors, on the acceptability of wire clamps on load bearing wire ropes of LSA launching systems.

The MAIB also recommends that P & O Stena Line Ltd, who are the owners of the vessel, remove from service bowsing wires which are fitted with 'U' bolt or 'Bulldog' wire clamps. These should be replaced with wires having spliced hard eyes, or arrangements of similar strength and permanence.