

SYNOPSIS

At 1446 Universal co-ordinated time (UTC) + 1 on 18 May 1999, while letting go *Sea Centurion*, a ro-ro cargo ship of 21,104gt, from the North West Wall in the Portsmouth Naval Base, a motorman was struck by a mooring rope and died from multiple injuries. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was notified of the accident at 1600 that day by Commodore Royal Fleet Auxiliary (COMRFA). Captain P Kavanagh carried out the investigation.

Sea Centurion was due to sail from Portsmouth to Marchwood near Southampton at 1500. *Powerful* was one of two tugs in attendance and was standing-by the port quarter waiting to be made fast. The after mooring party on *Sea Centurion* consisted of the third officer, two able seamen, a cadet and a motorman. The latter had been tasked to assist in the unmooring operations. It was the first time that he had carried out such a task.

During the unmooring operations, one of the mooring ropes became caught in one of the two propulsion units of *Powerful* and pulled the rope off the ship. The motorman was struck by the end of the rope as it came off the storage reel, and he was forced against a flight of steps.

On board *Sea Centurion*, the third officer called the bridge for immediate medical assistance. It was soon realised the motorman was severely injured, and resuscitation techniques were administered. When the ambulance team arrived they knew nothing could be done for him and he was later pronounced dead at the scene by a doctor.

The accident was caused by the motorman trying to stop the rope running out, thereby placing himself in a dangerous position. Contributory factors included his lack of experience and low perception of the dangers associated with a rope running out of control.

The report makes a number of recommendations to COMRFA and to the tug operator.