



SAFETY ALERT

- TECHNICAL No.53

LIFE-SAVING APPLIANCES

FREE-FALL LIFEBOAT –Unintentional release

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has recently become aware that the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) has issued a Safety Report following an incident when a free-fall lifeboat was unintentionally released.

It has been identified that the JX-4 release mechanism, particularly the hydraulic hook release ram, did not always fully retract after use. If the ram is not fully retracted after use it may take significantly less cycles of the hydraulic hand pump to operate the hook release mechanism (4 pumps rather than 12). This may lead to the lifeboat being released inadvertently or sooner than expected.

The lifeboat is a JY-FN-5.8 type, 27 person fibre reinforced plastic, manufactured in November 2009. It is fitted with JYF55 type launching appliance and JX-4 hook device and release mechanism. All the above are manufactured by the Jiangsu Jiaoyan Marine Equipment Company.

The above are only the initial findings, as the ATSB is still investigating this incident. They highlight the risk of release mechanisms being incorrectly reset following use or testing. All owners, operators and personnel involved in maintaining and surveying vessels which have a JX-4 lifeboat hook device and release mechanisms and JYF55 launching devices are recommended to review their training and operating procedures to ensure that:

1. all crew members and maintainers are aware of the need to ensure that hydraulic hook release rams are fully retracted after the system has been operated; and
2. safety procedures are reviewed to reduce the risk to personnel if an inadvertent lifeboat release occurs.

Copy of the ATSB Report (307-MO-2014-002) can be found under the following link:
http://www.atsb.gov.au/media/4791559/mo-2014-002_prelim.pdf

Ship owners should study the recommendations of the final ATSB report when it is released.