



Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

# SAFETY ALERT - TECHNICAL No. 48

## FAILURE OF SWIVEL BLOCK

A recent failure of a swivel block on a UK fishing vessel resulted in a near fatal incident.

The block itself was marked with a Safe Working Load of 10 Tons but the block reportedly failed at a much lower load. The block was bought from a UK supplier.

The picture below shows the shank with failed captive pin to which the body of the block connects. The casting is of low quality and particularly porous.



The picture below shows the block itself which would have located onto the broken shank.  
It is known that the block failed at less than 2 Tons.



There have been other recent instances where blocks used have failed at loads well within their rated capabilities and as such the MCA would urge all operators ensure caution when using a new block

**The MCA advise operators to:**

Lifting equipment will normally require a certificate of test and thorough examination. This should show the load to which the equipment has been tested, and its safe working load (SWL). If the test certificate has been produced outside the EU it should be viewed with caution, in any case of doubt a reliable certificate should be obtained.

It is important after any test to ensure that a thorough examination has taken place.

Keep track of their lifting gear by using a chain register (a record of maintenance for lifting gear). This need be a simple list of wires and blocks with a record of maintenance. Further advice or a guide document is available from your local Marine Office.

If in doubt, test the block before operational use by lifting a known load to ensure that the block is capable.