

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Fatal accident to a deckhand on board the scallop dredger *Honeybourne III* (PD905) 16 nautical miles south of Newhaven, England on 6 October 2023



Honeybourne III

Narrative

At 2345 on 6 October 2023, a deckhand on the scallop dredger *Honeybourne III* (PD905) was fatally injured when he was struck by a towing block that had fallen from the head of the port derrick. A section of chain supporting the fishing gear failed, releasing the gear that fell to the deck below, striking and fatally injuring the deckhand.

The chain that failed formed part of a quick-release assembly designed to enable the crew to release the gear from the derrick head should the dredging gear snag on the seabed and endanger the stability of the vessel.

Safety lessons

The investigation concluded that the training provided to people carrying out inspections of lifting equipment across the fishing industry is ineffective. The guidance supporting them also lacks clarity in the level of knowledge and competency required to ensure that the lifting equipment remains safe for use.

This safety flyer supplements the safety issues identified in the MAIB report into its investigation of a similar fatal accident to a deckhand on board the beam trawler *Cornishman* (PZ 512) on 6 February 2021 (MAIB report 8/2025¹), where the inspections carried out on the vessel's quick-release assembly did not identify the risk of failure.

It is vital that inspections of lifting equipment are carried out by someone who has the necessary knowledge and information to enable them to identify faults and make an informed decision as to whether the gear remains fit for purpose. The lifting equipment on fishing vessels operates in a harsh environment at high loads. Any failure places fishermen working in nearby at a serious risk of injury.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: www.gov.uk/maib

For all enquiries:
Marine Accident Investigation Branch
First Floor, Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1GH

Email: maib@dft.gov.uk
Tel: +44 (0)23 8039 5500

Publication date: January 2026

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

"The sole objective of the investigation of an accident under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of an such investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame."

NOTE

This safety flyer is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

© Crown copyright, 2026

You may re-use this document/publication (not including departmental or agency logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and you must give the title of the source publication. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/maib-reports/fatal-accident-on-the-beam-trawler-cornishman-with-loss-of-1-life?cachebust=1750323728>