

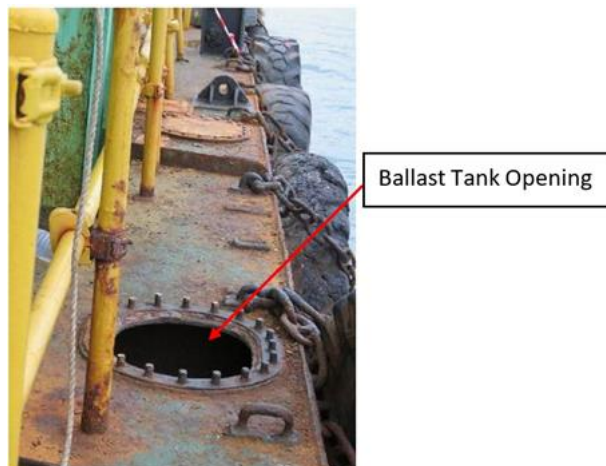
24 May 2021, Ref: 2122015

Two workers passed out and died in dredger's ballast tank

On 19 May 2021, a supervisor entered a dredging vessel's ballast tank, which is a confined space, for an inspection. The supervisor entered the tank without any appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and did not check if the confined space was safe. Shortly after entering, he collapsed and passed out.

After some time, another worker entered the tank in an attempt to rescue the supervisor, but also passed out upon entry. A third worker attempted a rescue as well, but he too collapsed inside the tank.

The rest of the crew subsequently introduced forced ventilation into the tank. The second worker eventually regained consciousness and managed to climb out of the tank. The supervisor and the third worker were later extricated by the Singapore Civil Defence Force but unfortunately did not survive.



Overview of the accident scene.

Recommendations

This tragic accident highlights the invisible dangers of confined spaces. Workers are reminded to:

- Not open up any manhole of confined spaces without proper authorisation.
- Not enter any confined space if they have not been trained for it.
- Not attempt any rescue on their own without any proper PPEs as doing so may put themselves in harm's way.

The WSH (Confined Spaces) Regulations 2009 spells out clearly all the safety requirements for work in confined spaces. These include:

- A Permit-To-Work system for confined space entry is in place.
- The confined space has been sufficiently ventilated and tested safe by a confined space safety assessor who has undergone the WSQ Assess Confined Space for Safe Entry and Work course.
- Workers entering the confined space have undergone the WSQ Perform Work in Confined Space Operation course.
- At least one of the workers inside the confined space is equipped with a portable gas monitor to continuously monitor the level of oxygen or other harmful gases inside the confined space.
- A confined space attendant is stationed outside the confined space.
- An emergency response and rescue plan is in place.

Employers are reminded to adhere to the above life-saving requirements.

Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 21 May 2021. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying any liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

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