

Talking Points: Falling Down

FOR USE DURING ONBOARD SAFETY MEETINGS



QUESTIONS

You are walking on the main deck or in the engine room and you come across the above.

Q What is the main concern?

Q What are the consequences of this hazard?

Q What steps can we take in order to protect ourselves from this hazard?

Q What does it say in your safety management system regarding such hazards and how to prevent these from occurring?

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ANSWERS

Q What is the main concern?

A Manhole covers may be removed for entry into a tank or other space for maintenance or inspections. Hatches in the engine room or other parts of the ship may be open when loading or transferring spare parts or stores.

In the photographs we can see that the open tank manhole cover on deck and the open hatch in the engine room are unguarded and a significant drop is exposed.

In the engine room picture (second photo) the trailing cables present an additional trip hazard.

Q What are the consequences of this hazard?

A There is a high risk of falling. A person passing through the area may not notice the unguarded opening and fall through it leading to a potentially serious or fatal injury.

Q What steps can we take in order to protect ourselves from this hazard?

A **Restrict:** the use of warning signage will alert persons passing through the area that a fall hazard exists and temporary barriers will prevent accidental entry into the danger area. Keep the area illuminated whilst the hazard exists.

Remain observant: If you see such a hazard then make sure it is reported and corrected immediately.

Training: Ensure all persons on board understand the reasons why this presents a hazard and the importance of taking action.

Q What does it say in your safety management system regarding such hazards and how to prevent these from occurring?

A Check your ship's safety management manuals and perhaps reference these against other best practice recommendations such as the United Kingdom Code of Safe Working Practices, which includes the following on the subject:

Chapter 6 Means of access and safety movement

6.4.7 Any opening, open hatchway or dangerous edge into, through or over which a person may fall shall be fitted with secure guards or fencing of adequate design and construction. Advice on guard-rails and safety fencing is given in Chapter 13. These requirements do not apply where the opening is a permanent access way, or where work is in progress which could not be carried out with the guards in place.

Chapter 13 Safe movement

13.1.1 Personnel are reminded to take care as they move about the ship. In particular, the following points, though obvious, are all too often overlooked:

Manholes and other deck accesses should be kept closed when not being used; guard-rails should be erected and warning signs posted when they are open;

13.4.6 Unattended openings in the deck should be kept illuminated or be properly or safely closed before lights are switched off.

If the task being carried out introduces the possibility of dangerous openings being exposed, ensure that this aspect is considered in the risk assessment and discussed during the toolbox talk before any operations begin.