

Report from the Division for Investigation of Maritime Accidents

Chemical/Products tanker NORD SNOW QUEEN

Accident to seafarer, 14 January 2009

Factual information

The ship

NORD SNOW QUEEN, IMO No. 9376828, is a chemical tanker of 24.066 GT and a length of 183.00 metres over all, built in 2008.



Sister ship of NORD SNOW QUEEN

Photo: Dampskibsselskabet NORDEN A/S

The accident

On 14 January 2009 whilst the ship was operating in the Mediterranean, the chief officer was on his way to the paint shop in the forecastle. When passing on a catwalk he hit his head against a stringer whereby he suffered severe bruise to his forehead. The chief officer fainted and fell on the deck which caused a broken arm and injury to his spine.

The chief officer

The chief officer is 45 years of age and 183 cm of height. He is holding a master's certificate and has approx. 13 years of experience in the merchant marine and before that approx. 12 years in fishing. He was newly employed by this company and had been on board for 10 days.

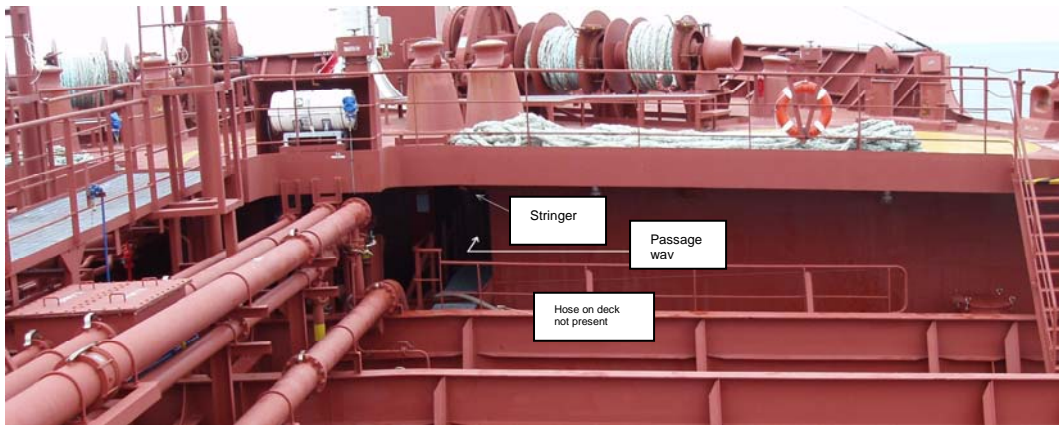
Narrative

The following in this chapter is based on statements from the chief officer, the master and the shipping company and on minutes from the extraordinary safety committee meeting, held on board on 16 January 2009:

On 14 January 2009 before noon, while the tanker NORD SNOW QUEEN was en route from Gibraltar to Malta, an ordinary safety committee meeting was held.

At the meeting it was suggested that warning posters regarding ventilation in the paint shop was moved in order to avoid the poster not being visible when the door to the paint shop was open. It was decided that this was to be carried out immediately.

After noon, the chief officer went to the paint shop below the forecastle to see how the poster could be moved to a more visible position.



View to the forecastle and the place of the accident

Photo: D.S. Norden A/S

On his way to the paint shop, when passing on a catwalk on the starboard entry below the forecastle, he hit his head against a stringer, and due to the heavy impact he was knocked out and fell down unconscious. He was not wearing a protective helmet.

After a short while, the chief officer regained consciousness and was sitting on the catwalk for a moment before he went to the bridge, where he knew the master was. He could feel on the right side of his brow and on the left arm that that he was badly hurt.

On the bridge the chief officer was placed in the bridge couch while the master was checking his pulse and blood pressure etc. The chief officer had sustained concussion of the brain and a fracture of his left arm.

The officer was tested for alcohol, on his own initiative. The test showed no alcohol.

Radio Medical, Denmark, was consulted and advised that the chief officer was taken to hospital ashore.

The ship deviated from its original route and headed for Sicily.

During the afternoon the chief officer's breathing stopped five times, and each time it was regained by the use of a resuscitator.

JRCC Denmark contacted JRCC Roma that, in cooperation with JRCC Cagliari, arranged the evacuation and transportation by launch of the injured chief officer to a hospital south of Cagliari, Sardinia.

Subsequently, after he was hospitalized, it was ascertained that the chief officer also sustained injury to his spine/back. This was not noted on board, even though he had been moved around e.g. returning from the forecastle, during treatment where he was moved into sitting position etc., because he had severe pain from the other injuries.

The catwalk and the lower stringer

The catwalk is made of gratings approx. 25 cm above deck level. Where the catwalk, just abaft the forecastle, is turning from transverse to longitudinal there is a yellow painted lower stringer one has to step over when passing into the paint shop.

The height from the grating to the top of the lower stringer is 20 cm on one side and 23 cm on the other side.

The upper stringer

Where the catwalk is turning from transverse to longitudinal there is a stringer below the forecastle.

The height from the grating to this stringer is 165 cm at the lowest side increasing to 186 cm at the highest side.

The stringer was painted in yellow and black stripes.

Weather conditions

At the time of the accident there was north-westerly wind 10 m/sec., wave height approx. 2.5 m, air temperature approx. 12° C, good visibility and daylight.

The ship was steady in the sea, and the deck was dry with no slippery spots.

Protective helmet

It is standard company procedures and instructions that protective helmet is worn at all time during work on deck.

Analysis and conclusions

The height between the catwalk grating and the upper stringer is 165 cm increasing to 186 cm.

The upper stringer was painted in yellow and black stripes, but not covered by any soft and protective material.

Where the catwalk turns from transverse to longitudinal there is a lower, yellow painted, stringer one has to step over.

The chief officer hit the upper stringer because this was situated over a catwalk in a relatively low height.

The lower stringer may have drawn the attention of the chief officer passing on the catwalk and thus prevent him from becoming aware of the upper stringer.

The chief officer did not wear a protective helmet.

This may have contributed to the severity of the incidents.

Initiatives and recommendations

At an extraordinary safety committee meeting on 16 January, it was decided that a risk assessment for walking on deck was to be made.

Furthermore it was suggested to apply rubber protection pads to sharp corners on low hanging stringers and all yellow markings and yellow/black warning stripes to be renewed where necessary. This conclusion has been distributed to the fleet of sister ships as well as to the site office.

A new railing is planned to be erected on the catwalk near the stringer to slow down persons' passing to the paint shop.

The Investigation Division recommends the shipping company:

- to emphasize to all seafarers employed by the company the importance of wearing a protective helmet as stated in the company's own instructions and
- to implement considered/planned alterations of the railing arrangement at the catwalk to ensure the safe passage beneath the stringer on this ship and on sister ships as well.

4 March 2009

The Division for Investigation of Maritime Accidents