



SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community

REGIONAL MARITIME PROGRAMME



SAFETY NOTICES

Lake St. NABUA
Private Mail Bag, Suva, FJI
Tel: 679 337 0733
Fax: 679 337 0146
Email: maritime@spc.int

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WHAT LIES BENEATH?

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An experienced stevedore fell about 5m into a void space within a ship's hold, fracturing his pelvis, an arm and a leg.

The stevedore was working at night in light drizzle on a multi-purpose container vessel. He was working with another colleague to stow timber in the hatch square of number three lower hold, on top of previously loaded timber.

The pair used a ladder on the port side of the hatch to reach a tween deck. The ladder continued to the bottom of the after bulkhead on the port side of the lower hold. The void space between this bulkhead, and the timber in the hatch square was about 5m².

On the starboard side of the tween deck there was another ladder, which also led down to the lower hold. However, unlike the ladder on the port side, this ladder was in the hatch square and the stevedores were able to easily step across from the ladder onto the top of the timber. This area of the hold was well lit.

The stevedores continued loading timber and after about 3 hours, the foreman called 'smoko'. One stevedore stayed to remove cargo hooks from the last load.

Lookout!Points

1. The stevedore entered a poorly lit space, which he could not determine was safe. His employer had advised stevedores to use the correct access to holds and cargo spaces and never to move into areas where lighting was poor.
2. The stevedore was wearing full safety equipment, including a hard hat, although this was not properly secured. Fortunately, the stevedore had tied his hoodie over the hard hat, and this kept it in place.

Goal: Safe & secure shipping, cleaner seas, improved social and economic well-being of seafaring communities within the Pacific region.