

Fire in accommodation

Casualty Circular No. 7 of 2003

No. CAS 9-NT- (34)/2001

Dated 22nd Sept.2003

Sub: Fire in accommodation

1. 1. Narration :

1.1 A off-shore supply vessel of 1302 GT caught fire in accommodation space while the vessel was berthed alongside the quay. The fire was located in the Master's cabin and was extinguished by the ship's staff using fire water.

1.2 Detailed inspection of the accommodation space revealed that the fire had started somewhere near the sofa and the table which were located at the Starboard corner of the Master's cabin. Subsequent to the fire, the Master's cabin was completely gutted. It was also noted that the Master's cabin had an electrical fan which too had got completely burned. Fans on this ship were noted to have plastic blades and fan motor is covered with plastics.

1.3 The accommodation space of this ship is provided with heat type fire detector which normally activates at 680 C - 700 C. As the fire did not spread outside the Master's cabin and fire alarm had got activated, it can be stated that ship's fire detection system was functional.

2. Cause of Accident :

Since the Master's cabin was completely burnt, it was difficult to determine the actual cause of the fire. However, following probable causes could have initiated the fire :

2.1 Short circuit in the Master's cabin.

2.2 It was noted that one of the portholes of the Master's cabin were open. Therefore, sabotage cannot be ruled out.

2.3 Over-heating of any running electrical equipment in the Master's cabin e..g. fan.

3. Lessons Learnt :

3.1 The accommodation A/C plant of this ship was non-operational. Therefore, it had become a practice with the ship staff to keep their portholes open and fans running continuously for days. This continuous running of fans can lead to over heating of equipment resulting in fire. Owners, Managers & Ship Masters are advised to keep their ship's A/C plant operational to avoid such circumstances. Ship's staff should take notice that electrical equipment when not in use must be switched off.

3.2 Regular insulation tests of all wiring circuits on the ship should be carried out & logged. Low readings should be rectified immediately.

4. This issues with the approval of the Nautical Adviser to the Govt. of India.

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