

Information Note

Number: 25-02

Published: 25/09/25

Subject: The Dangers of Enclosed Spaces

Overview

It is estimated that around 350 seafarers and 3rd party workers have been killed due to asphyxiation in enclosed spaces on ships since 1996. 43 accidents have occurred since 2022, accounting for 70 of these deaths.

An enclosed space is a space which is not designed for continuous worker occupancy and has either or both of the following characteristics:

- a) limited openings for entry and exit, and
- b) inadequate ventilation.

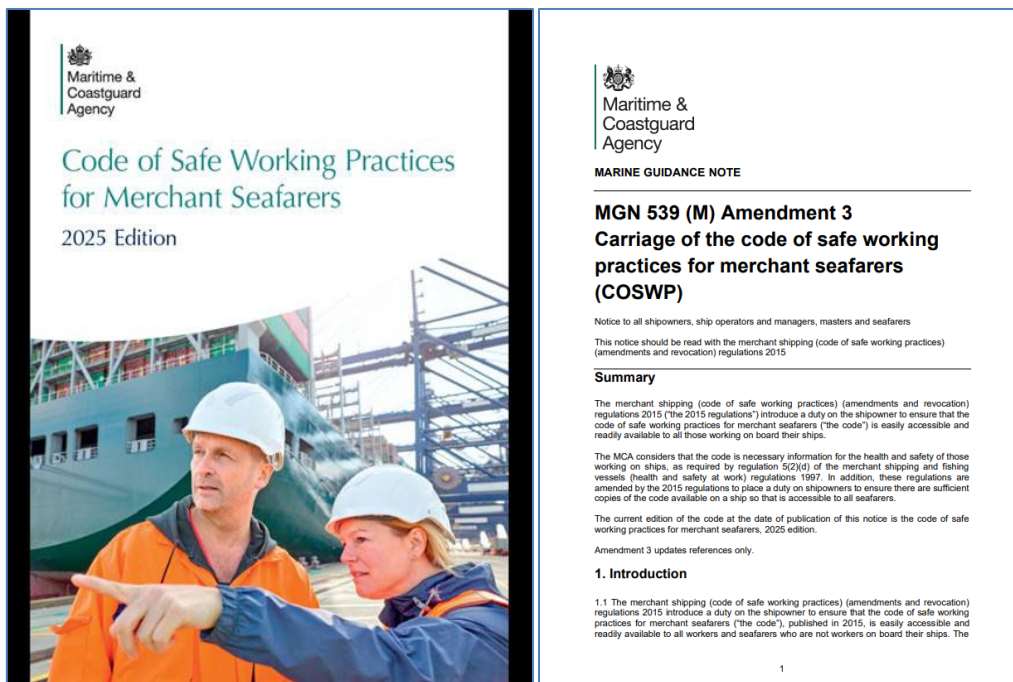
Examples are, cargo spaces, double bottoms, fuel tanks, CO2 rooms, battery lockers, fish rooms, sewage tanks, refrigerated sea water (RSW) tanks and vizier tanks.

A confined space is any place which, because of its enclosed nature, there is a reasonably foreseeable risk due to its restricted access.

All too often, enclosed spaces are associated with multiple fatalities, often with rescuers becoming casualties. You need to:

- Avoid entry into confined spaces where this is reasonably practical
- Assess the risks where entry cannot be avoided - Confined Space Risk Assessment
- Train those involved in confined space entry
- Ensure that procedures are in place to manage and control confined space entry
- Have in place, suitable rescue procedures for those overcome within confined space that do not involve putting others at risk

Please refer to MCA Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) latest edition and Marine Guidance Note MGN 539 (M) - Amendment 3.



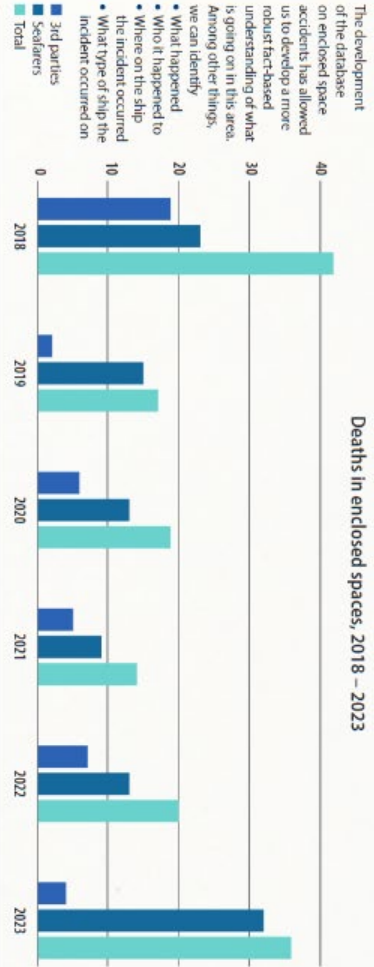
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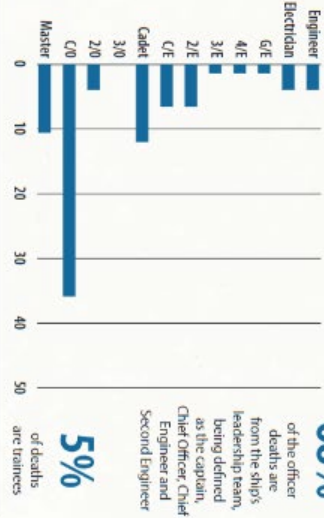
Statistics provided by Intermanager.org

Statistics 2018-2023

Deaths in enclosed spaces, 2018 – 2023



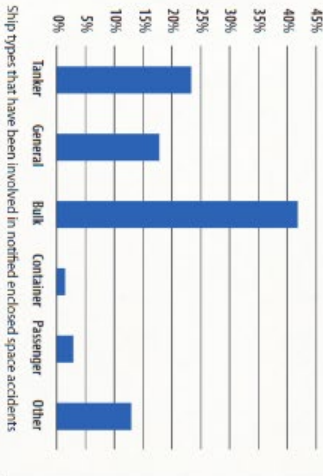
Officer deaths by rank



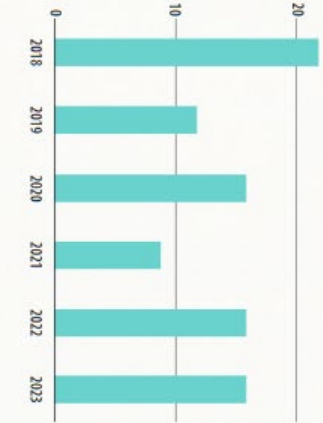
68% of the officer deaths are from the ship's leadership team, being defined as the captain, Chief Officer, Chief Engineer and Second Engineer

5% of deaths are trainees

Ship Type



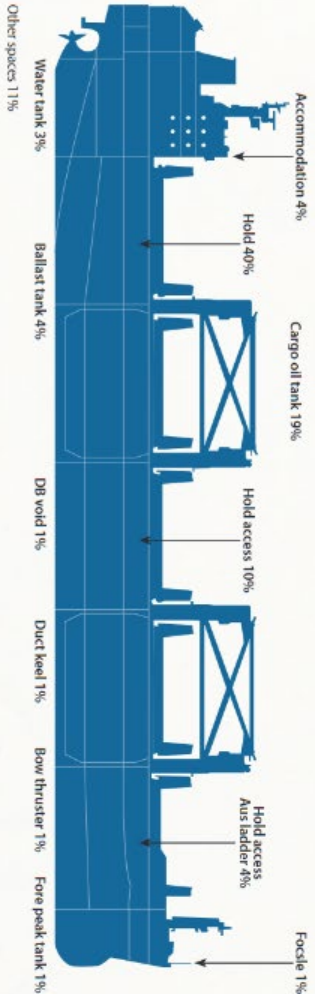
Accident frequency year on year



Crew deaths by rank



WHERE ENCLOSED SPACE ACCIDENTS HAPPEN – ALL SHIP TYPES
1996 to 1st October 2024



3rd party deaths by role



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