

Fall Overboard Prevention

Best Practices

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**Compiled by the
Fall Overboard Prevention Subcommittee
of the
AWO Interregion Safety Committee**

This document is a list of fall overboard prevention best practices, as compiled by the AWO Interregion Safety Committee (ISC). It is intended to provide companies with ideas currently in use at various AWO member companies to reduce the risk of falls overboard. The best practices listed here do not necessarily constitute an exhaustive list of all potential safety practices that any particular company should undertake. Each company must determine for itself its own operational needs and range of safety measures necessary to protect its employees.

Background

One of the ISC's safety priorities for 2000 was Fall Overboard Prevention. After producing and disseminating a sample policy on fall overboard prevention, the Fall Overboard Subcommittee determined that further work in this area was warranted. Several AWO member companies have made fall overboard prevention a major initiative in their operations, and the subcommittee concluded that it would be valuable to survey the ISC for fall overboard prevention best practices and then to distribute that information.

Method

The Fall Overboard Prevention Subcommittee developed a survey listing 34 practices and policies addressing the prevention of falls overboard. The purpose of the survey was twofold. The first was to capture and disseminate company policies, specific safe work practices and unique initiatives and the second was to get safety professionals thinking about ways they might incorporate these same policies, practices and initiatives into their companies' fall overboard prevention programs.

Conclusion

Most survey respondents indicated that they used a majority of the best practices listed in the survey, which are included as the bulk of this document. In addition to the 34 practices/policies mentioned above, survey respondents suggested 18 additional practices and policies that are also included (designated by shading). The Fall Overboard Prevention Subcommittee would like to thank the respondents for their input and is hopeful that this compilation will provide new ideas for companies to consider adding to their fall overboard prevention programs.

Fall Overboard Prevention Subcommittee:

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Fall Overboard Prevention “Best Practices”

Policies/Practices

- Avoid walking on the outboard edges of the barges in a tow except when absolutely necessary.
- Carry loads on the outside shoulder if it is necessary to walk on the outboard gunwale (gunnel).
- Announce known "bumps" and brace yourself.
- Never walk the notch.
- Do not step on manholes/hatches.
- Make sure manholes/hatches are closed.
- Notify the pilothouse any time someone goes on the tow.
- Use the buddy system while on a tow. Identify a buddy and maintain visual contact while on a tow.
- Discuss all known hazards (duck ponds, notches, etc.) with the off-going watch.
- Shovel/sweep all dry cargo spilled on deck.
- Keep walkways clear of obstructions/debris.
- Never walk or stand on the outboard gunwale (gunnel) when barges are coming together.
- Notify the pilothouse any time someone goes on the tow.
- Never jump to or from moving equipment.
- Shuffle your feet when handling line on deck to avoid stepping in the bight of the line or tripping.
- Attempt to stand on the inboard side of the barge/boat when loosening or tightening rigging or line.
- Never walk backwards when on the boat or tow.
- If a task requires two people, never attempt to perform the task alone.
- Face the water or outboard when working (line handling, washing down, etc.).
- Always step over rigging; never step on it.
- Face a ladder when climbing up or down.
- Use handrails where available.
- Balance the load in a yawl and always abide by the capacity/weight restrictions.
- Require that guard chains on the boat remain up at all times. If necessary to remove or drop guard chains, immediately rehook when task is complete.
- Walk the centerline of covers after checking that all covers are in place.
- Notify CEO/high level management of every fall overboard incident.
- Investigate fall overboard incidents and root causes.
- Investigate near miss fall overboard incidents and root causes.
- Maintain frequent radio contact with the wheelhouse.
- Do not walk or step between the forward corner deck fittings and the end of barges.
- Walk with one hand free.
- Do not step over open water.
- Illuminate shadows before walking through them.
- Turn on lights when someone has to go outside the vessel after dark.

Equipment

- Provide flashlights to all employees working on deck.
- Protect duck ponds (line, netting, etc.).
- Provide head lights to all employees working on deck.
- Wherever possible, provide non-skid deck paint on walking surfaces.
- Paint the perimeter of barges with a contrasting color.
- Paint all tripping hazards (hatches, face wire leads, bitts, cavils/kevels, etc.) with a contrasting color.
- During ice or snow conditions, use %spikies+(ice cleats).
- Consider providing safety harnesses where necessary.
- Provide %low lights+or flashing lights to wear on hard hats at night.
- Provide specially developed barge ladder.

Training

- Magnetize %S.A.F.E. (Stay Alert for the Edge) Decks+brochure to display in doghouse/galley.
- Include fall overboard prevention as topic of discussion at new hire training.
- Include fall overboard prevention as topic at periodic vessel safety meeting.
- Conduct periodic fall overboard drills.
- Utilize fall overboard video instruction.
- Display fall overboard prevention poster.