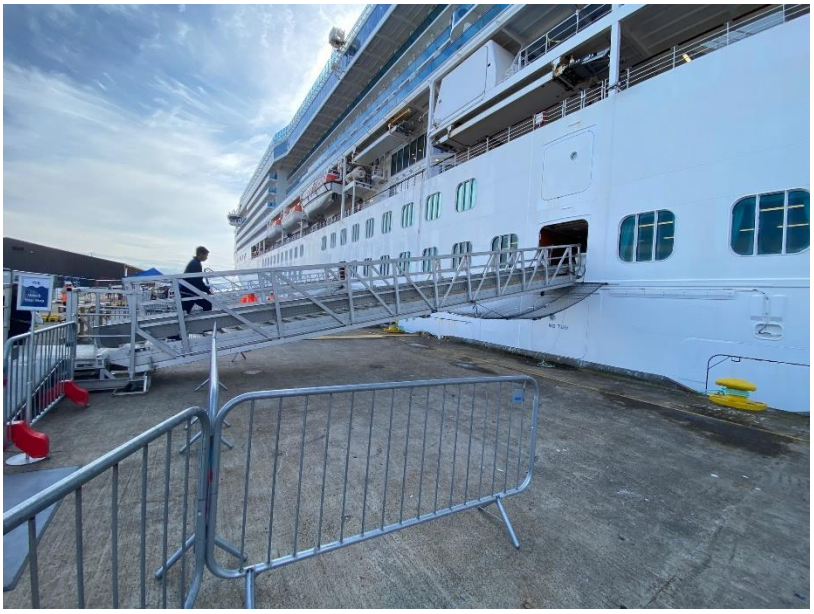
Safety Alert: HIPO Near Miss – Cruise Ship Departure

What Happened:

At 1700, a Cruise ship was preparing to depart the Port of Cromarty Firth (PoCF), Service Base facility.

The ship advised the PoCF Pilot that a number of passengers were still ashore. Whilst the ship searched for the passengers, they made a decision to go from full mooring arrangements to 2+2 Fore & Aft.
Soon after, the missing passengers were located onboard. The Master instructed to further reduce lines to 1+1 Fore & Aft, the Ship's Mooring station slackened lines due to high-tensions.

As soon as this had happened, the ship suddenly started to drift off the berth; dragging the gangway, which was still connected to the crane, across the quayside.



Note: the gangway was not in use during the Near Miss event, but was rigged to the Crane for demobilisation.

Actions taken:

- PoCF Operations Supervisor used VHF to advise the Pilot the gangway was still connected.
- PoCF Pilot instructed the Master to thrust the ship back alongside.
- The crane could not slew / reach any further to compensate, so the crane operator took the decision to lift the gangway clear.
- The gangway swung back towards the quayside, where it was brought under control & landed.

Lessons Learned:

- PoCF Pilot strongly advised the Master that the unplanned departure methods were unacceptable – The Master accepted the advice and issued a formal apology to PoCF and debriefed the bridge team.
- In review, the Master advised that they should have kept full mooring arrangements until the gangway had been disconnected.
- Crane operator to review Risk Assessment / Method Statement, to ensure connection is not made to gangway prior to instruction to lift.
- Although rigged for demobilisation, the gangway had continued to remain in place to assist the missing passengers, which the ship had advised, were thought to be ashore.
- Notice to Mariners & Port Operations Notice issued by PoCF Marine Operations & General Manager.
- Positives: Shore > Ship communications very effective and Crane Operator demonstrated competent / confident contingency action to prevent a very serious incident.

The Port of Cromarty Firth are committed to the full investigation of all Near Miss events; this ensures we extricate accurate operational learning with the aim to prevent future recurrence.

Ref No: SA-018-2023

06 October 2023

Near Miss – Cruise Gangway

What Happened:

A cruise vessel was preparing to depart the Port of Cromarty Firth (PoCF). The gangway had been rigged to a landside crane in preparation for removal.

The ship advised that a number of passengers were believed to still be ashore. Whilst the ship searched for the passengers, it was decided to reduce full mooring arrangements to 2+2 fore and aft.

The passengers were subsequently located onboard, and the Master instructed to further reduce the lines to 1+1 fore and aft.

The ship's mooring station slackened the lines due to high tensions and the ship suddenly drifted off the berth, dragging the gangway which was connected to the crane across the quayside.

The crane operator could not slew or reach any further to compensate for the movement of the vessel so took the decision to lift the gangway clear. As a result, the gangway swung back towards the quayside, where it was brought under control and safely landed.

Whilst these actions were underway, the PoCF Operations Supervisor used VHF to advise the Pilot that the gangway was still connected, and the PoCF Pilot subsequently instructed the Master to thrust the ship back alongside.

Key Findings:

- The swift action of the crane operator to lift the gangway from the vessel averted a very serious incident.
- The notification from Master to Pilot in relation to potential missing passengers altered the pre-planned sequence of events for the vessel departure. This led to the incident occurring, as the gangway had been rigged for removal but was then not immediately lifted.

Key Findings (continued):

- The full mooring arrangements should have remained in place until the gangway was removed.

Positives:

- The crane operator recognised that lifting the gangway off the vessel presented a risk to personnel on the quayside, however, given the circumstances, demonstrated confident contingency action to prevent a much more serious incident. PoCF support the operator's decision and actions.
- Shore to ship communications were very effective in preventing the situation developing further.

Actions by PoCF:

- PoCF have reviewed their safe system of work and risk assessment relating to cruise vessel departure to cover communications and the risk of passengers who are delayed returning to the vessel.
- In future there will be no change to mooring arrangements whilst the gangway is fast.

Considerations for Members:

PSS members may wish to:

- Review safe systems of work to ensure that:
    - The procedure for vessel departure is adequately described.
    - The protocol for communications with vessel Master and bridge team are clear.
- Ensure risk assessments cover the reasonable risk that vessel passengers may be delayed.
- Promote a culture where employees are supported to 'take five' when unexpected circumstances occur, allowing time for those involved to ensure the operation can continue safely.

PSS is grateful to the Port of Cromarty Firth for sharing this information, their safety alert relating to this incident is attached for your information.