



**Operational Alerts** inform Signal Mutual Members of serious incidents within the Mutual that resulted in permanent disability, death, or a significant near miss. If you have similar operations, please share this Operational Alert and have a safety discussion with operation managers, supervisors, equipment operators, and all affected employees. It is imperative that management review their operational controls at all levels to mitigate similar hazardous conditions and/or acts.

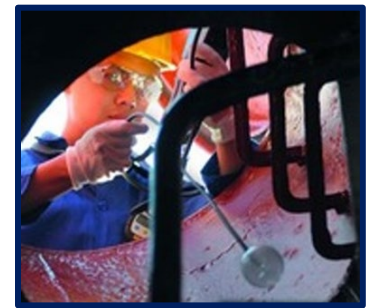
### INCIDENT: SHIPYARD COMPETENT PERSON ERROR LEADS TO SERIOUS NEAR MISS

#### SUMMARY OF RECENT INCIDENT

As repairs were being made to a tug boat in the shipyard, diesel fuel was taken out of the vessel, and the number 4 diesel tanks on both port and starboard sides were cleaned and certified as “Safe for Hot Work” by the Marine Chemist. Hot work was limited to only the replacement of vent pipes in these tanks.

Later in the project, cleaning on the adjacent port and starboard number 3 diesel fuel tanks was completed, and the Marine Chemist was called in for inspection. During the visit, the Marine Chemist noticed approximately 5 gallons of diesel fuel present in the adjacent number 4 tanks that had previously been declared “Safe for Hot Work.”

The Marine Chemist confirmed the Shipyard Competent Person (SCP) tags and logs were updated the same morning of his inspection. After interviewing the SCP, he learned the SCP simply dropped their hose to check the tank but that he had not entered or visually inspected the tank interior. Fortunately, LEL levels remained low, and no explosive atmosphere or toxic exposures developed within the space.



#### CONSIDERATIONS

- It is both a regulatory requirement and a vitally critical task for the SCP to physically enter the space and perform a visual inspection to ensure the safety of personnel. The SCP must be ever vigilant and never complacent in their duties.
  - The atmosphere must be tested for oxygen, flammable vapors, and toxic gases if toxins are suspected to be in the space. Compare test results to established standards to determine if a safe condition exists.
  - If the atmosphere is safe for entry, then the competent person needs to enter the space and look for physical hazards, especially those that can affect the atmosphere, such as residues that can be flammable or toxic materials.
  - Additional procedures for atmospheric testing in confined spaces can be found at: [https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/atmospheric\\_test\\_confined.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/atmospheric_test_confined.pdf)
- Confirm with the ship’s crew that lines have been blown and no residual material remains prior to beginning work.
- Use blanks, plugs, or other methods to isolate pipelines to prevent the discharge of materials into the confined space.
- Be alert for changing conditions, such as liquids or smells, as these could indicate a serious hazard in the space.
- If smells or liquids are observed, don’t assume it’s safe. Evacuate the space immediately and report it to your supervisor or safety coordinator. Any odor or liquid material in the tank must be investigated.



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