

SURVEYOR'S NOTES

We have highlighted the issue of enclosed space entry – particularly tank entry – in the previous two issues of Standard Safety. It continues to be an issue of great concern. Recently, we have become concerned that the message of safe tank entry is not getting through to the seafarer.

Our surveyors continually see the most astounding actions when asking crews to prepare for tank entry before inspecting a ballast tank for example. All enclosed space entries require a safe entry procedure to be followed before entry.

On a recent survey of a dry cargo ship, the club surveyor prevented a chief officer from entering a recently opened ballast tank because a proper tank entry procedure had not been followed. The chief officer, who was halfway down the tank, retorted that it was 'OK' to enter the tank because he had the oxygen meter strapped to his leg. As he went into the tank, he argued the O₂ meter would alarm before he would breathe in the affected air.

Consider the level of ignorance or lack of training that is required to give a senior officer the feeling that all was 'OK' if the O₂ meter was strapped to his leg before he entered a tank – a tank that had not had its atmosphere previously checked. Consider also the failing in the SMS, the failure of training, the failure in the permit-to-work system, and the failure in the safety culture of the ship and company.

Enclosed space entry must be high on the agenda of training sessions, safety meetings, officer's conferences and so on. Make it a priority on your ship to make sure everyone knows what the proper tank entry procedure is. IMO and Flag require that the atmosphere is tested before tank entry with a calibrated O₂ meter.

Ref: IMO res A.864 (20)



^Ballast tank access within a hold without lighting



^ Entering an enclosed space – proceed with caution



^ Inside a ballast tank



^ Ballast tank access

