

EMERGENCY ESCAPE DOOR WAS LOCKED

SECURITY MUST NOT COMPROMISE SAFETY



- RISQ 3.2 - Item 13.15 - Are all areas of the machinery space well illuminated, emergency escape routes clearly marked, unobstructed and are ship's crew familiar with the escape routes?
- SIRE 2.0 – 5.10.7. Were the Master, officers and crew familiar with the escape routes from the machinery spaces, pump rooms, compressor rooms, accommodation spaces and, when in port, from the vessel, and were these routes clearly marked, unobstructed and well illuminated?

FINDING

During an onboard pre-vetting inspection, the PAS Auditor identified that the engine room emergency escape, located on the forward side of the accommodation block, was locked from the inside, with no means of access from the outside for firefighting or casualty evacuation purposes. An emergency escape route that is not readily accessible in critical situations constitutes a significant safety risk. Prior to the vessel's arrival at the port of inspection, the Master removed the lock, thereby restoring access from both sides.

ROOT CAUSE

The escape door had been temporarily secured by onboard personnel for security purposes; however, the ability to access it externally in the event of an emergency had not been verified. This oversight occurred as the pre-arrival checklist did not explicitly require confirmation that emergency escape doors are operable from both sides. Furthermore, company procedures did not provide specific guidance on the management of escape doors during elevated security levels, while ensuring that emergency access arrangements are not compromised.

IMPORTANCE

Engine room emergency escape routes are critical life-saving arrangements in accordance with SOLAS requirements. They are designed to ensure the safe evacuation of personnel, as well as to facilitate access for firefighting and casualty rescue operations. If an escape door cannot be opened from both sides, emergency response may be significantly delayed, personnel may become trapped, and the vessel may be exposed to serious PSC consequences. In the event of an engine room emergency, timely response is essential; therefore, emergency access must never be compromised, even under elevated security conditions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Instruct vessel personnel that emergency escape doors must remain always operable from both sides, without requiring keys, tools, or special knowledge.
- In high-risk ISPS conditions, implement enhanced patrols and stricter access control measures, rather than securing emergency escape doors.
- Review and where necessary, revise company procedures to address this requirement.
- Circulate this case, along with clear guidance on escape door management, across the fleet.
- Require superintendents to verify compliance during onboard visits.
- Ensure that the condition and accessibility of escape trunks are verified prior to both arrival at and departure from each port through the relevant checklists.