

# SAFETY ALERT



**Safety Alert No. 398**  
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## **Lifeboat Failures and Damage Occur During Maintenance**



*Lifeboat gripe plate after contacting a platform*



*Lifeboat in the water after an inadvertent descent*

In March 2020, two incidents in the Gulf of Mexico involved damage to lifeboats during testing and inspection. Both lifeboats were later secured, and no personnel were injured. The details of each incident are provided below:

- As a life capsule was lowered during a dynamic load test after routine maintenance, the lifeboat reached its required level above the waterline and the brake was applied. However, the brake failed to provide any stopping capability and the life capsule fell into the Gulf of Mexico. The initial attempt to retrieve the lifeboat was unsuccessful because the winch failed to hold the load, but the lifeboat was eventually recovered when a work boat arrived on site.
- Facility personnel were in the process of lowering a lifeboat as part of its regular monthly inspection when the lifeboat swung and contacted the platform. The life capsule's gripe plate struck the side of the gripe pin, causing the gripe plate to be partially removed from the lifeboat's hull. Personnel later assessed the situation and ensured that the lifeboat was secured in its davit.

**Therefore, BSEE recommends that operators consider the following:**

- Conduct routine lifeboat maintenance at frequencies required by the Quality Assurance/Quality Control/Mechanical Integrity programs in place;
  - Programs should be designed and implemented to fully satisfy all applicable Coast Guard type-approval, maintenance, testing and drilling requirements. They should also include all Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) recommended maintenance procedures and timelines. The Coast Guard recommends using [Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular \(NVIC\) 03-19](#) and its enclosures.
- Review the scope of work carefully with contractors before commencing work and verify that contractors conducting maintenance activities are properly performing their duties safely and are following the agreed work plan;
- Ensure compliance of third-party servicing and inspections with all applicable regulations and scrutinize servicing to confirm that service provision supports those requirements. Special consideration should be given to all recommendations resulting from a third-party;
- Consider implementing a testing and verification plan after any work is done on latches and winches and before any personnel are allowed in the capsules;
- Thoroughly inspect a lifeboat's winches, latches, brake pads, and control cables prior to permitting personnel to enter a lifeboat to conduct maintenance;
- Consider the use of maintenance pendants to mitigate risk while entering lifeboats for servicing and inspections and consult OEM for guidance on appropriate selections and use of maintenance pendants;
- Review load test procedures for accuracy on an interval established in your SEMS program and as required by applicable Coast Guard regulations;
- Consider current environmental conditions (i.e. wind speed, wave height, etc.) in the Job Safety Analysis when lowering and/or launching a lifeboat for testing or drills and contact the [Coast Guard Eighth District Outer Continental Shelf](#) Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection for further guidance on lifeboat launching requirements and alternatives;
- Replace launch cables, brake pads/shoes, and centrifugal brakes every five years as per typical offshore lifeboat OEM recommended inspection guidelines; and,
- Ensure that any modification to a Coast Guard-approved system (e.g. boat, davit, releasing gear system, winch, etc.) has been approved by the Coast Guard prior to placing the life-saving equipment in service.

A **Safety Alert** is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.