# SYNOPSIS

The Turkish registered, ISM accredited bulk carrier *Gulser Ana* entered Stormont Wharf, Belfast on 16 October 2001. On arrival, she underwent a Port State Control inspection by MCA surveyors. Thirty-seven deficiencies were found and the vessel was detained.

On the morning of 17 October 2001, two seamen were tasked with freeing up and greasing the releasing hooks on the starboard lifeboat while it was in the water. These had been found seized the day before, during the inspection.

Both seamen wore lifejackets and hard hats. They freed and greased the forward hook, but found the aft hook operating rod sheared. Therefore, after the latter had been freed up and greased, the seamen used lashing to secure the hook in the closed position, ready to hoist.

The chief engineer and chief officer were then called to inspect the operation of the hooks. The bosun raised the lifeboat to the embarkation level with the seamen aboard.

The boat was left suspended by the falls. The chief officer joined the seamen on the boat to inspect the work. He was wearing working gear and a hard hat, but no lifejacket.

Shortly after he boarded, the forward hook released suddenly and without warning. The forward end of the boat dropped, leaving it suspended vertically from the aft fall. The two seamen and the chief officer were thrown into the water.

The two seamen were able to pull the unconscious chief officer to the surface and keep him afloat until all three were picked up by the pilot launch. The launch delivered them to the dock police and an ambulance ashore.

The release mechanism was poorly maintained, the locking pin was missing and the crew had little information or understanding of its operation.

Recommendations are made to the operating company to ensure that all safety and maintenance manuals are accurate and in the working language of the crew. It is also recommended that a system of formal risk assessments be introduced aboard its vessels, along with training where necessary.

The recognised organisation, Bureau Veritas, auditing the ISM system on behalf of the administration, is recommended to follow the ISM Code and IACS Recommendation 71 regarding the development of shipboard technical manuals.