

Heaving line snap-back causes injury

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During a berthing operation, a heaving line under tension snapped while being handled by the mooring team on the quay.

What happened?

The sudden release of energy caused several workers to lose balance and fall onto the quay surface. One worker sustained a head impact when falling because their helmet chin strap was not properly secured, allowing the helmet to shift and fail to protect their head.

The injured person was taken to hospital, treated, and released after a short period, and the incident was classified as a Medical Treatment Case.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls



Line of fire



What went wrong?

The rope snapped and...

- No-one had inspected the mooring and heaving lines before use.
- Workers were stood in snap-back danger zones in a congested berth area.
- More than one rope was being handled at once.
- The snap-back risk was not fully understood by the shore-based workers and had not been discussed before the job.
- There was inadequate supervision and training.
- PPE (hard hat) was not worn correctly.

Lessons to learn

- Always inspect mooring and heaving lines before use - reject damaged or poor-quality lines.
- Ensure everyone on the job – including third-party personnel and shore-based workers - has a thorough understanding of snap-back zones and the potential consequences of being in them.
- So far as reasonably practical, handle one rope at a time to reduce congestion and risk.
- Position yourself carefully during mooring operations, ensuring you leave adequate space around you.
- Ensure adequate oversight or supervision of mooring operations.
- **Stop the job if you think it is unsafe!**

Members may wish to refer to:

- IMCA video – [mooring incidents](#)

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