INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

E

SUB-COMMITTEE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF IMO INSTRUMENTS
12th session
Agenda item 4 and 8

III 12/INF.18
15 May 2026
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LESSONS LEARNED AND SAFETY ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM THE ANALYSIS OF MARINE SAFETY INVESTIGATION REPORTS

IDENTIFIED ISSUES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IMO INSTRUMENTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis of fall accidents on board ships

Submitted by InterManager

SUMMARY

Executive summary:	This document provides information and analysis on fall accidents onboard ships between the years 2012 to 1 May 2026.
Strategic direction, if applicable:	7
Output:	7.4 and 7.5
Action to be taken:	Paragraph 4
Related documents:	III 12/4/4; III 11/4/4, III 11/INF.18; III 10/INF.16 and III 9/INF.12.

Introduction

1 This document supports document III 12/4/4 and provides information on fall accidents on board ships from 2012 until 1 May 2026, as well as updates on InterManager's previous submission to the III Sub-Committee through document III 11/INF.18.

2 InterManager has gathered and analysed available verified information on fall accidents which have occurred on board ships between 1 January 2012 and 1 May 2026. This information is contained in the annex of this submission.

3 The number of falls from ships remains high, with 51 fall accidents being reported so far in the year 2024, 38 so far in 2025 and 12 so far in 2026. There, however, remains a significant lag between the accident occurrence, its investigation, and the release of the report as well as its submission to the Marine Casualties and Incidents (MCI) module of the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS). Therefore, it is anticipated that the figures for the previous four or five years will mature in time.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

4 The Sub-Committee is invited to take note of the analysis, trends and information presented in the annex of this submission and to consider how such information might be taken into account when deliberating safe movement on board ships, whilst taking cognizance of lessons learned from past incidents.

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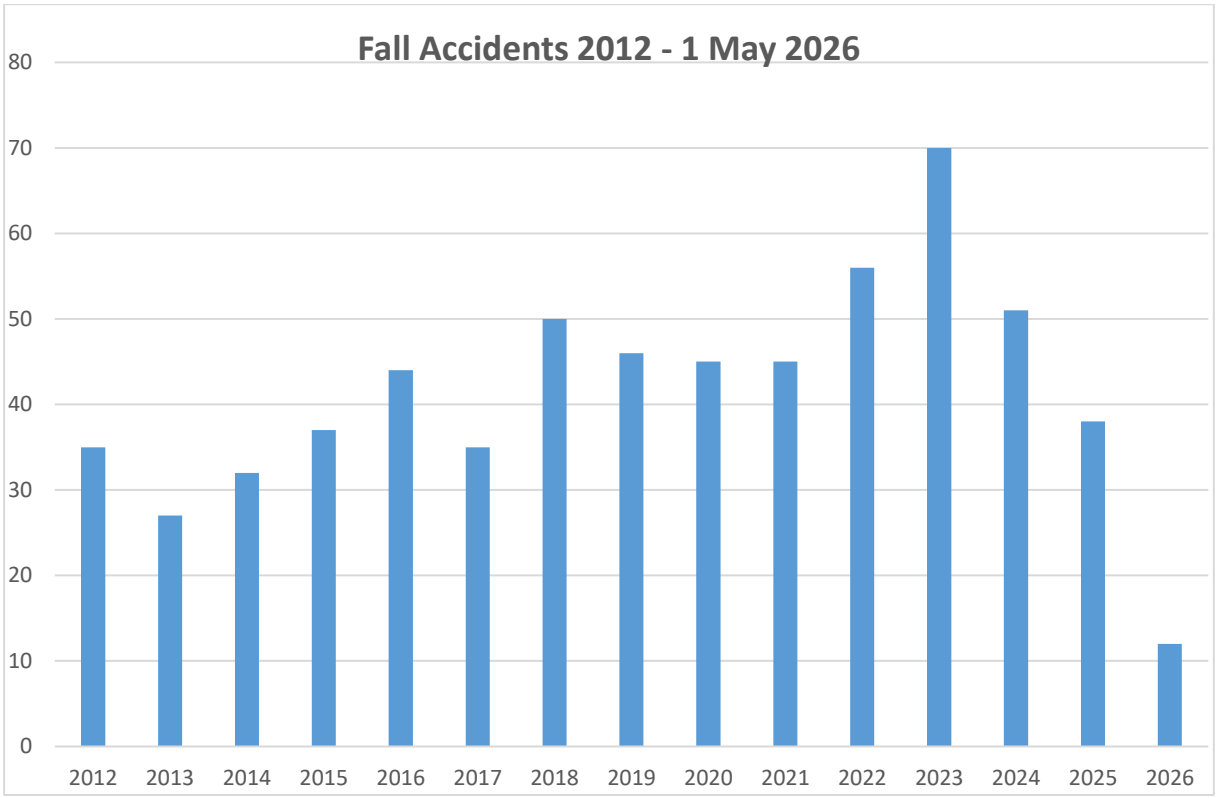
ANNEX

ANALYSIS OF FALL ACCIDENTS

Figure 1



1 This figure shows the number of verified fall accidents per year from 2012 until 1 May 2026.

2 The vertical axis is the count of accidents, and the horizontal axis represents individual years.

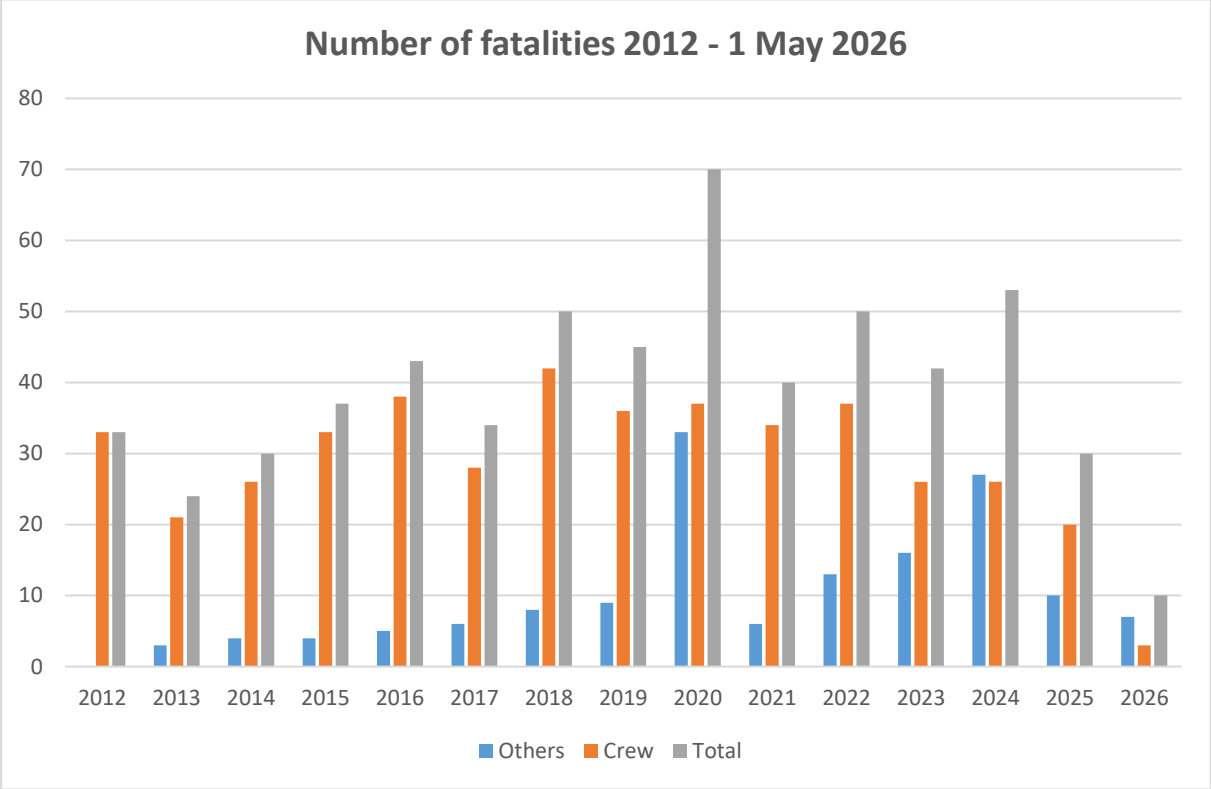
3 Given the increased transparency within the industry together with more efficient reporting and investigating, the number of accidents captured is increasing. However, there still remains a lag between the accident occurring, its investigation and the release of the report. This means that the data set for recent years will, by its nature be incomplete, and depict an evolving landscape. This may be addressed by a more robust commitment by Member States to submit an initial report to the appropriate GISIS module while the investigation of the accident progresses.

4 Although such a lag is understandable, it severely inhibits the ability for others to learn, and there remains a risk that similar accidents may occur in the period from the initial event to the final report being released. The use of safety bulletins, safety flashes and interim reports assist in mitigating this risk and those who utilize these and other means of communicating initial findings should be commended for their contribution to ongoing safety on board ships.

5 The shift in recent years remains consistent with the majority of accidental falls on ships resulting in persons falling into the sea, while the minority of all accidental falls on ships resulted in persons falling from height within the ship.

6 Likewise, the majority of all fall accidents occurs whilst the ship is at sea rather than in the port area.

Figure 2



7 Figure 2 shows the number of verified fall fatalities per year from 2012 until 1 May 2026, where the vertical axis measures the fatality count, and the horizontal axis represents the individual years.

8 The following colour key has been used:

.1 Orange – Seafarers who have died due to falls on board ships for the year indicated.

.2 Blue – Third parties who have died due to falls on board ships for the year indicated.

.3 Grey – The total of seafarers and third parties who have died due to falls on board ship for the year indicated.

9 With improvements in communications from ship to shore, both commercially and for private use, there is much greater transparency within the industry particularly when things do not go as planned. Likewise, the process of reporting and that of investigation are now more mature and have become more encompassing. These factors have led to a greater number of incidents being reported, recorded and investigated.

10 The number of all fatalities for the years where the information is most complete, sits within the band of 44 to 70 persons. The spike in 2020, when COVID-19 was most impactful and the industry was in a state of flux, particularly trip lengths and relief schedules of ship

crews remain a significant outlier. This may be of note when considering the issues in the Gulf region in the early part of 2026.

11 The largest category losing their lives in fall accidents are the ship crew, e.g. those undertaking the work on board. This continues to account for two out of every three persons losing their lives on board ships due to fall accidents. Likewise, fewer with management roles on board ships lost their lives due to fall accidents when compared with enclosed space accidents over a similar time period.

12 Pilots unfortunately continue to account for 3% of the total lives lost due to falls during the period of study. Access to or egress from ships via pilot ladder continues to account for 8% of the total loss of life due to falls.

Figure 3

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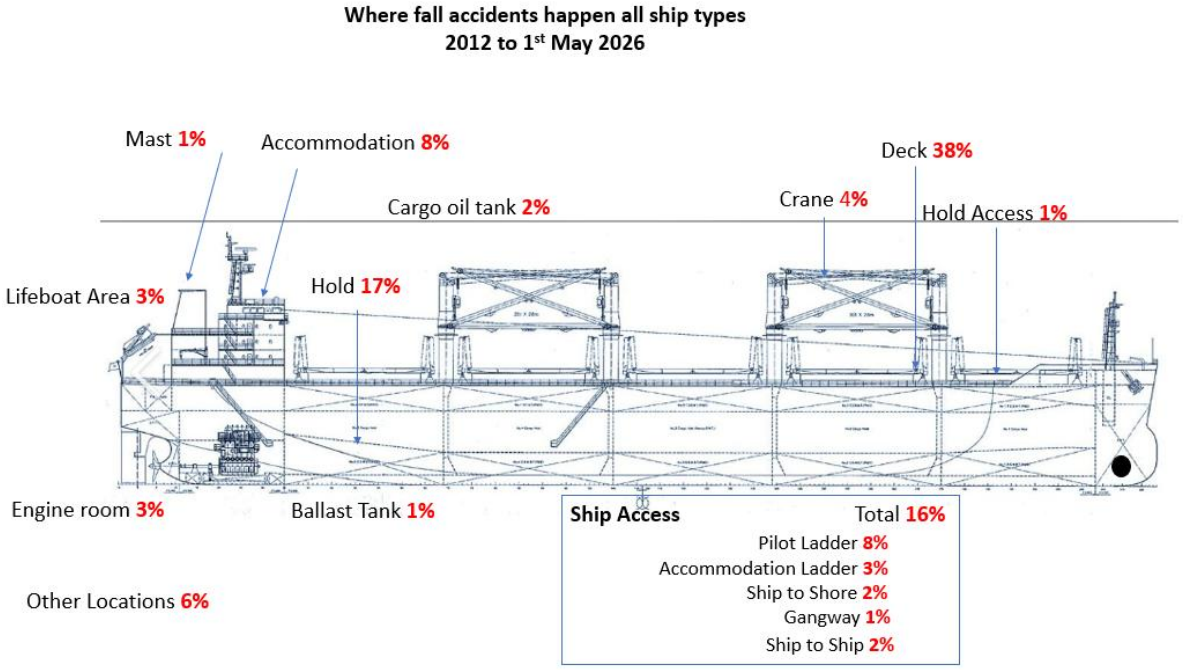


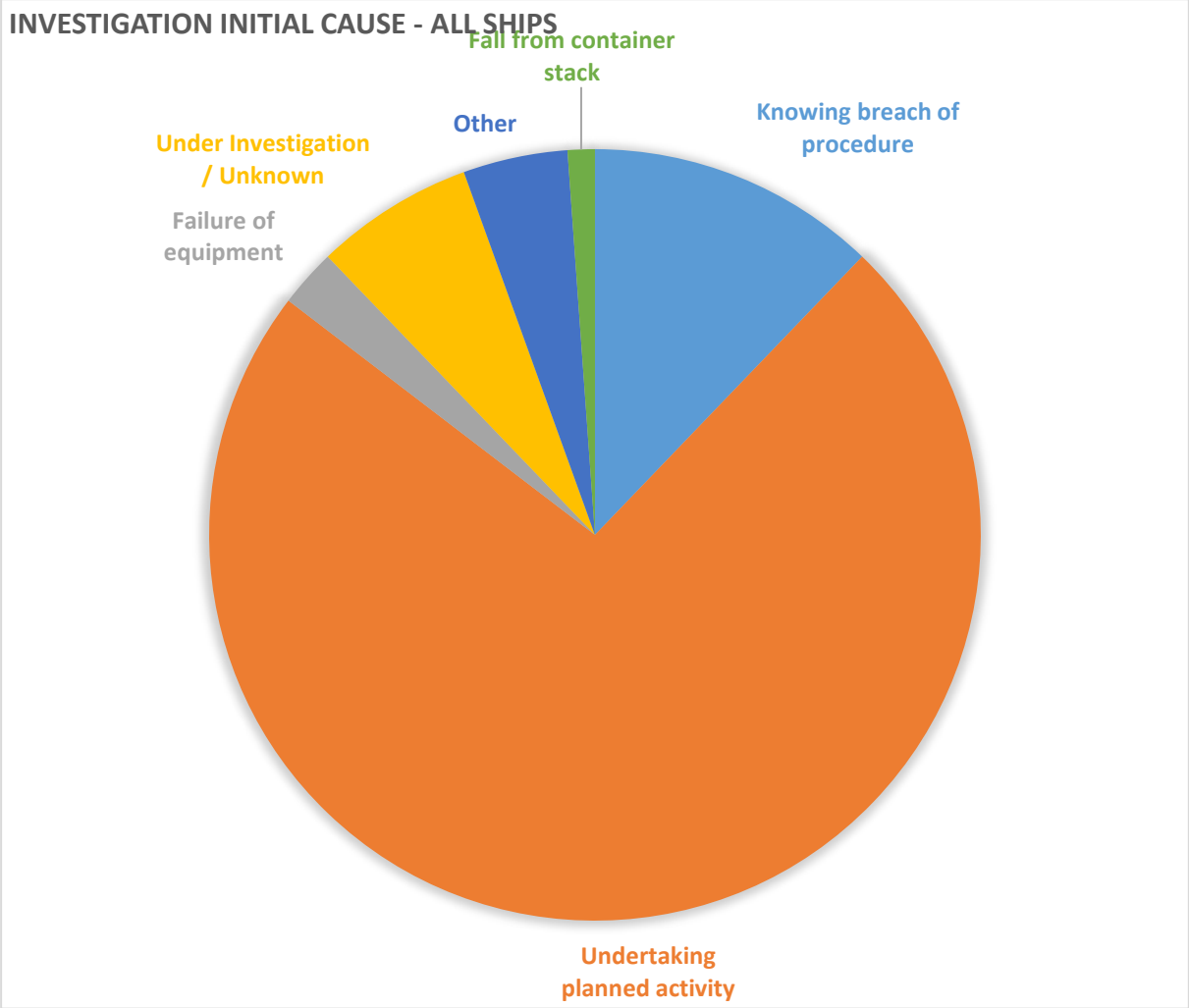
13 This figure shows pictorially where fall accidents have occurred on board ships within the period 2012 to 1 May 2026 utilizing a generic ship profile.

14 The majority of fall accidents still continues to occur within the working areas of ships such as the deck working area, including cranes, holds, cargo oil tanks.

15 The area of the ship which sees the highest number of falls is the ship deck area. On many ships this is the primary working area of the ship and therefore sees the most activity occurring. When combined with the sub-areas of the ship's deck, such as cranes, holds, cargo and ballast tanks and hold access areas, these locations account for 63% of the total number of fall accidents recorded for the period of study.

16 Access to the ship remains the third most common area for fall accidents and these usually result in persons falling into the sea adjacent to the ship and losing their lives. These types of falls account for 16%, which again is the same as the findings from the previous period of the study.

Figure 4



17 This figure shows the nature of the immediate cause of the accidents that occurred due to falls on board a ship for the period 2012 to 1 May 2026.

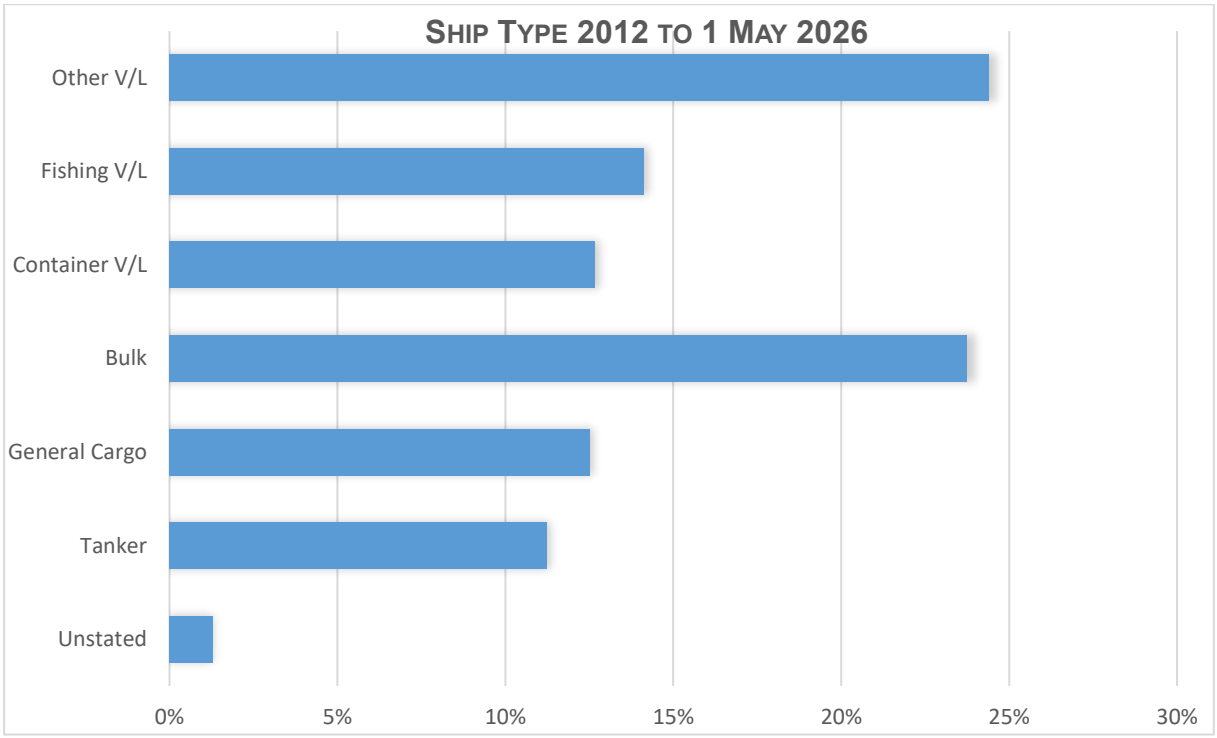
18 Some accidents remain under investigation, so the immediate cause is as yet undetermined. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine an initial cause of accident from some accident reports other than that the casualties involved were falls, whilst in other recorded accidents the investigation report remains unavailable. The combined sum of these figures is shown in the "Under investigation/unknown" section.

19 The primary area identified in the immediate cause of falls, continues to involve situations where the ship crew or contracted shore staff were undertaking a planned activity which unfortunately went wrong, leading to an accident. This may indicate a lack of hazard awareness or perception.

20 The second substantive segment is where fall accidents have occurred on board ships where a known breach of the procedures was made.

21 Failure of ship equipment leading to a fall shows a slight reduction to 2% while falls from container stacks remain at 1% of the total.

Figure 5



22 This figure shows the breakdown of ship types which have had a fall related accident.

23 The ship types which have been included within the category "others" are:

.1 reefer/ RoRo and livestock ships;

.2 tugs, dredgers and off-shore ships;

.3 passenger ships, and

.4 special service or specialist ship types.

24 The tanker category includes all bulk liquid carrying ships and includes those which carry oils, chemicals, and gases.

25 General cargo and bulk carriers continue to account for a high proportion of fall accidents and continue to account for 37% of the total accidents for the period of study. However, their working areas, the deck and holds tend to be more complex and involve more working at height hazards, such as cranes and the need for hold entry.

26 This ship type employs also the greatest number of third parties in high activity situations to assist in the loading or discharging of their cargos. Importantly, unlike the ship crew, many of them do not have the necessary knowledge of safety procedures on board the ship they have been temporarily engaged to work on.