The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) is currently conducting a marine safety investigation into the occupational fatality of a Messman involving a galley stores’ provisions lift / elevator. Although the investigation is ongoing, it has been determined that the access doors to the provision lift / elevator were either:

1. not fitted with a safety interlock such as a door limit switch; or
2. the safety device was removed.

A door limit switch would have prevented the provisions lift / elevator from being operated when the access doors were open. A properly functioning provision lift / elevator limit switch (safety device) would likely have prevented this occupational fatality.

The Administrator recommends that ship managers have all lifts / elevators on board their managed ships inspected to ensure that safety devices, including limit switches and interlocks as required by the manufacturer, are fitted and operating properly. Lifts / elevators should be locked-out on the applicable electrical control panel until any missing safety devices are installed or improperly functioning safety devices are repaired.

Although it involved lifting gear other than a lift / elevator, the Administrator is aware of a recent marine casualty when electric jumper cables were installed to override the lifting gear’s limit switches which resulted in a catastrophic failure of the crane boom. The ship’s crew was not aware of the jumpers even though the electrical control panel and lifting gear were reportedly subjected to routinely planned inspections.

The Administrator is also currently investigating the death of an Electrician who died while performing maintenance on a shipboard lift / elevator. A contributing factor in this case was that the elevator / lift was not locked-out before the Electrician entered the lift / elevator shaft.
It is recommended that ship’s staff assigned to perform planned maintenance and repair work on lifts / elevators should conduct a pre-task Tool Box Talk, Job Safety Assessment, Job Hazards Analysis, etc., to:

1. identify potential occupational hazards associated with the planned task;
2. determine how to mitigate the identified hazards; and
3. ensure other crewmembers’ awareness of the tagged-out lift / elevator.

The Administrator also recommends ship managers review and, as appropriate, revise the inspection checklists and planned maintenance procedures for lifts / elevators fitted on board their managed ships to ensure they include a list of all safety devices to help ensure that any missing devices are identified, and that they are all operationally tested on a routine basis by a competent marine engineer. It is also recommended that these safety management system checklist-procedures include a requirement that elevators / lifts be tagged out-locked out until missing safety devices are either replaced or ones with improperly functioning safety overrides are repaired.