

Marine Safety Forum – Safety Flash 11-16

Issued: 25th May 2011

Subject: Limitations of Equipment

A recent Near Miss on a vessel highlighted the limitations of Auto Darkening Welding Helmets. The Chief Engineer was welding a small crack in the bulkhead of the Aft Peak tank where it meets the shell plating, the access to which was awkward due to thruster cable trays etc.



He was using a recently supplied auto-darkening welding helmet which was operating correctly until he got to a point where the weld bead was starting to pass under a cable tray which resulted in the sensor on the helmet becoming obscured by the cable tray, causing the screen to become instantaneously clear while the arc was still lit.

Luckily there was no eye damage done on this occasion and this incident highlights the fact that these helmets have limitations and should be used with caution. Vessels that have this type of Welding Helmet are advised to consider a more conventional welding mask.

All personnel are reminded to assess the risks prior to using any equipment and take into account the limitations which might be encountered.