

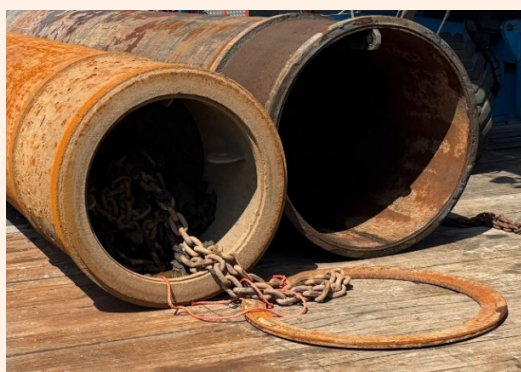
Introduction

Recently, an incident occurred in which a vessel was unable to depart after being released from its berth. From the wheelhouse, there appeared to be no indication of a problem. The control system showed that the spud poles had been fully retracted, and the camera images also revealed no abnormalities. However, it turned out that one of the spud poles was still in contact with the bottom of the harbour. As a result, the vessel was unable to move clear of its berth.

What happened?

The spud pole involved consists of three telescopic tubes. The two inner tubes, together with the support ring of the outer tube, had been fully retracted and secured. As a result, there were no visible indications for the crew that anything was wrong.

In its retracted position, the outer tube normally rests on a support ring attached to the inner tubes. The weld connecting this support ring had failed, causing the outer tube to drop down. Because there were only a few metres of water beneath the vessel, the tube did not fall completely out of the assembly. Instead, it came to rest on the bottom of the harbour while still being partially retained within the vessel. As a result, the vessel was unable to leave its berth.



How could this incident happen?

The support ring was attached to the outer tube by means of a fillet weld. After five years of service, the welded connection proved to be insufficiently strong and failed completely.



What are the lessons learned?

An investigation carried out in cooperation with PZI partner EOC Insurance shows that incidents involving spud poles occur more frequently. In many cases, these incidents are caused by design deficiencies or excessive wear.

Prevention tips:

- Use spudpoles only for their intended purpose and ensure they are not subjected to loads beyond their design limits.
- Do not depart until the spud poles are fully retracted and properly secured. Perform an additional visual check to confirm they are completely raised.
- Request the manufacturer's operating manual and maintenance instructions.
- Ensure the crew is properly instructed in the correct use and maintenance of the spud poles.
- When purchasing and installing spud poles, take future inspection and maintenance requirements into account.

Sources

This publication is made in collaboration with a PZI-member and EOC-insurances.

<https://varedevrienden.eoc.nl/zijn-ze-boven-of-niet-waarom-het-vaak-misgaat-met-spudpalen/>
<https://library.platformzeroincidents.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/BPG-Meren-04-2017-v1.pdf>

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