

# Safety and health alert

## 08/00 Deckhand crushed against jetty by river ferry

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### Incident

A 16-year-old employee incurred serious internal injuries, including amputation of over 50% of his liver, when he was crushed between a river commuting ferry and a jetty. The employee was a deckhand on the ferry involved.

The employee fell into the water near the jetty whilst trying to retrieve a rope that had fallen overboard. The employee had been leaning against an upright gangplank that, in this position, was forming part of the side of the vessel, when the gangplank unexpectedly fell open causing the employee to fall into the water.

As the employee attempted to pull himself back onto the ferry through the gangplank area, the ferry crushed him against the jetty.

### Factors

1. The gangplank collapsed when the deckhand leant against it for support. There had been reported difficulties with the mechanism on the gangplank used for locking it into the upright position. It is undetermined if the gangplank's locking mechanism failed or if the difficulty staff had with locking the gangplank in position resulted in it not being properly locked into place.
2. There were no set procedures or methods in place to allow for the safe retrieval of overboard objects, such as ropes. Consequently staff were neither trained in, nor aware of, correct and safe procedures for retrieving overboard objects.
3. Equipment such as boat hooks and telescopic poles were not available on the vessel and the employee resorted to using a broom to retrieve the rope.

### Recommendations

1. Develop, implement and train staff in safe working procedures for retrieving overboard objects.
2. Wherever appropriate, provide suitable equipment such as boat hooks to assist with retrievals.
3. Provide and maintain efficient locking mechanisms on gangplanks, doors and gates, etc which act as barriers to prevent persons falling from a vessel into the water.

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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