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Severe Food Poisoning of crew

Health Circular 1.

Protank Management S.A , collects and takes into account all “loss prevention” circulars, case studies or “casualty investigation reports” within industry and share findings with its crew.

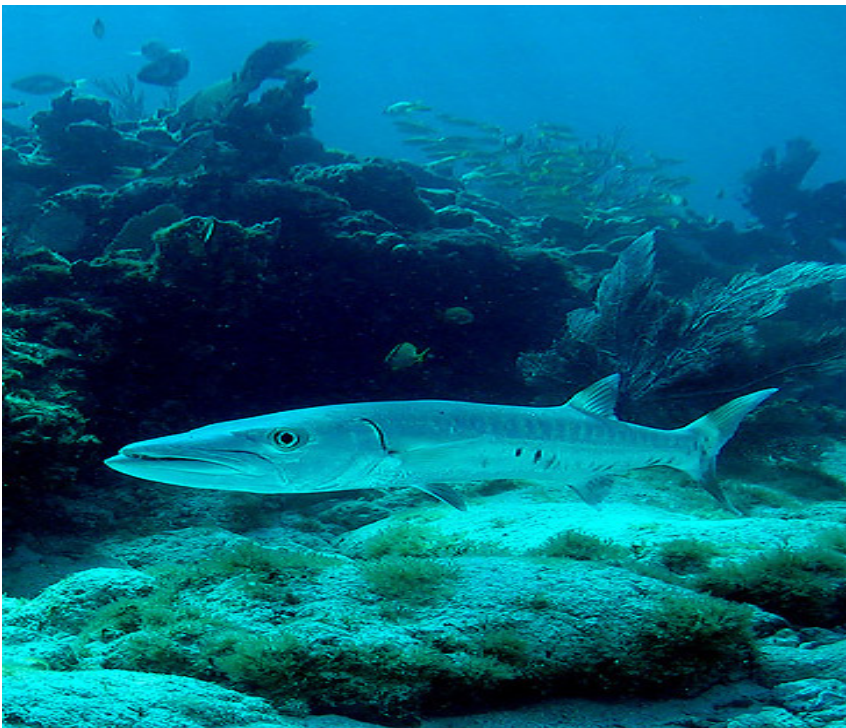
Officers and crews onboard are encouraged to participate with their comments after discussing those topics in safety meetings.

Our aim is to avoid recurrence of similar incidents.

Please find attached a case study pertaining to Crew Health, dealing with crew fishing and cooking a fish called barracuda with severe consequences.

EVENT TYPE: Severe Food Poisoning of crew. Non –Company’s vessels.

**CAUSE: Ciguatera fish poisoning
Lack of Knowledge / Lack of awareness regarding health hazards**



Great Barracuda(Sphyrna barracuda)



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SHIP'S LOCATION: At anchor off St. Eustatious , Netherlands Antilles

DATE OF EVENT: August 2008

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF EVENT

While at anchor the crew caught a large Barracuda fish.

Although the ship had a good stock of frozen fish , the crew could not resist the temptation to have freshly caught fish for their evening meal.

The fish was cooked and was served to the officers and crew at 1800 hrs.

The ship sailed at 1930 hrs bound to Houston. By 2000 hrs several crew members were complaining of stomach ache. This included the Master who at midnight instructed the duty officer to contact shore for medical advice. At that time , only 12 out of 35 crew were in a fir state while others were suffering from paints , vomiting and / or diarrhoea.

After consulting with the medical team ashore it was decided to monitor the condition of the crew until the next morning. By this time the Master and others were vomiting and bringing up blood.

By the 12hrs the vessel had changed course towards Puerto rico and a helicopter evacuation was arranged for the more serious of the crew members.

When the vessel arrived at the anchorage a medical team went on board to carry out a check up on the remaining casualties. After this , a total of 23 persons were confined to the hospital and several days later were repatriated to continue their recovery at home.

WHAT WENT WELL:

- Some crew did not eat the evening meal.
- Activated carbon tables were administrated as first aid
- Radio medical advice was taken
- The decision was made to alter course and land sick crew

WHAT WENT WRONG(CRITICAL FACTORS)

It is dangerous to eat fish caught in relatively shallow tropical waters as they can cause an outbreak of Ciguatera.

Ciguatera is an illness in humans caused by eating fish contaminated with ciguatoxin.

This toxin is very common in many micro organisms in shallower tropical waters and is ingested by larger species higher up the food chain such as barracuda and other fishes.

LESSON TO BE LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ciguatoxin is very heat /cold resistant and cannot be killed off by conventional cooking or freezing.

The symptoms are severe and can last from a few weeks to years often leading to long term disability.

Any fish caught in shallow tropical waters must not be used for eating.

There is no any effective antidote for this form of poisoning and the main way treatment is supportive care.

If an outbreak is suspected , seek medical advice immediately