

RECOMMENDATIONS

11/18/44

FRANCIS C. HARRINGTON - 6/7/44

Master

Rubber Suits: One other thing which occurs to me is that when the damage was inspected immediately after the explosion, the Chief Engineer put on a rubber life saving suit to go down into the shaft alley. He reported to me that although the suit was supposed to be proved and tested, it did not actually work because it filled up with water when he went down there. I think that if this is the general condition, the suit is dangerous.

Hatch Beams: They were steel beams with a sort of a lock supposed to hold them in place, but in this case it failed to work. It was a hook or a lug which was attached to the flange on the hatch coaming which was pushed over to engage the bottom of the beam when in place in the socket. There was one of these for each end of the beam. Apparently the explosion forced up the beams and forced these lugs back. Since the explosion I realized that these locks were not satisfactory and I had holes drilled through the flange and the beam so that the bolt could be put right through the flange and the beam to avoid the same thing ever happening again. First of all, I'd suggest that our original locking devices are not effective in this case although they are apparently efficient for ordinary use at sea. I don't know whether bolts would be better, but I think this may be and I have taken that precaution since that time.

FRANCIS C. HARRINGTON - 6/7/44

2nd Mate

Hatch Beams: I was turned in at the time of the explosion. I came up on deck, the ship was stopped and the hatch--evidently something happened. I went back to #5. The Chief Mate was back there and the 3rd Mate and the Skipper was on the bridge. It seems that the force of the explosion threw out the hatch boards and 3 or 4 beams and soldiers that were on the hatch at the time fell down through the hole with beams and covers on them. I believe there were 7 or 8 killed and a number of them injured. I believe that the locking device in there isn't very good. I don't have much faith in that. I don't depend on that. It would have to be a device that wouldn't jump out. It would have to break before it would give. This type of device drops in a slot and there is a bolt between and it can be kicked out and with an explosion, they will jump. Of course, it's hard to say just what would hold to something like that. Another type of locking device might hold or break. As far as this goes, it slipped out and didn't break. The locking device itself would either break or hold. It was a small rectangular piece of steel that fit in on the ends of the hatch beam and it had little notches on the hatch coaming. There is a notch in there, a "V" shaped notch and this piece of metal was bolted, but it was bolted so that it would swing and kick it out and back in again. It drops in there. In view of what happened, I believe it might have been better to have bolts. Of course, they come into the construction of the ship. We don't just know what is going to happen. We work with all we have.