

DEATH DEALING DRINKS

The Story

This true story of five thirsty crew members of a Gulf Coast fishing boat provides tragic proof of the adage, "Alcohol and salt water don't mix!"

After spending a night anchored in the vicinity of the Mobile Ship Channel a lonely Saturday night eased by the fellowship of good shipmates and liberal amounts of wine and whiskey brought on board the vessel and its crew were supposed to proceed to the snapper fishing grounds in the Gulf of Mexico. During the "morning after," however, the captain found a red and white can which was labeled "lacquer thinner." Highballs of orange juice mixed with the contents of the can were poured for all hands and the can was thrown overboard. One crew-member didn't drink any of the brew because it didn't taste right to him, but the other four emptied their glasses.

The four that drank the concoction became ill and began vomiting. When their condition hadn't improved on Wednesday morning, the crewman who had not drunk any of the mixture decided to bring the men in for medical attention. The captain died within three days of their return to port; another crewmember died within a month. The two other crew-members who drank the highballs lived, but were hospitalized for three months.

Lesson Learned

Autopsies of the bodies revealed that the cause of the death was the ingestion of carbon-tetrachloride. The chemical was used by personnel of the company that owned the fishing vessel to clean and maintain the fleet's electronic equipment. Though the chemical is normally kept locked in a store room ashore, the can found by the captain that Sunday morning was probably inadvertently left onboard the vessel by a repairman. The lesson should be obvious.

Prevention Through People



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