The serious injuries in the Dorikos incident were caused by a parted fall wire.

Since the report was the seafarers not being trained to operate the equipment. The method to change out the wire was not ‘fail safe’. Once again, when offering advice, the regulators have not looked beyond the ship’s rail. Be warned: this tragedy could so easily happen on another ship, as a piece of paper on the Dorikos will not help other vessels with similar equipment onboard.

I am unable to comfort myself with the knowledge that the remedial action will prevent the same error happening in a similar fashion on another ship. Therefore, I suggest that any supplier of equipment should ensure the manufacturer’s design makes full allowance for the competence and capability of the seafarer, rather than requiring the crew member to be trained to operate it. A poor design encourages mistakes that no amount of training or management intervention can completely mitigate.

Manufacturers should step back to consider, and then make allowance for the large number of different and non-standard pieces of equipment onboard a ship. They can make a small but valuable contribution to ensure that the use and maintenance of their equipment is carefully thought through and make full allowance for the ability of the end user — especially as the user may well have a bit of paper to say they are competent, but most likely will be without experience and working knowledge of the task being performed.

It is suggested that the manufacturers draw on their experience and knowledge, along with that of other stakeholders, and then:

(i) design the system to meet the specific requirements
(ii) design the operation, maintenance, training support and other procedures to ensure that the equipment performs as required in use.

Returning to the key point in the Dorikos report and the improvement in procedures in 2003 CHIRP raised concern over the quality of operational and maintenance manuals. Amongst the recommendations made by the Maritime Advisory Board at that time were the following.

1. Manufacturers of equipment for safety-critical marine applications across life-saving, cargo operating, navigation, communications and engineering disciplines should provide operating and maintenance manuals to a common document standard using a uniform layout as well as agreed terms, abbreviations and symbols for the correct use of such manuals by mariners.

2. The use of simplified technical vocabulary and icons should be encouraged. If used, reproductions of photographs and drawings should be of an adequate standard and documents should be available in an agreed number of languages.

3. A relevant authority should verify the compliance/standard of documentation at the design/ approval/acceptance stage and audit its continued compliance thereafter.

Sometimes it is the little and easy things that are the hardest to adopt. Stay safe out there!