

HANGING AROUND

By BMC(SW) Michael R. Thibault,
Naval Safety Center

A Sailor was tasked with painting his ship's anchor after the ship had won the Golden Anchor Award. I had just departed his ship, and, while walking to my van, I heard someone yell, "Pull me up, pull me up!" I looked, and the Sailor was hanging under the anchor!

He had slipped off the paint stage and couldn't get back on. The supervisor had left the fo'c's'le, and several minutes passed before the Sailor's shipmates returned to hoist him up.

I talked to the supervisor when he arrived on the fo'c's'le and asked where he had been. He replied he had gone to take a break. Basically, he left his assigned job, which was to supervise his shipmate and to ensure nothing went wrong while his shipmate was over the side painting the anchor.

Had the supervisor used ORM, he would have asked himself what problems might arise if he left this person hanging over the side without anyone nearby to assist him. What if the painter had become tangled in the tending line? He could have strangled himself.

We always should think ahead before delving into a task and ask ourselves three things:

1. What can go wrong? How can this get screwed up?
2. What can I do about it if something goes wrong?
3. If I cannot do anything, whom do I tell?

The Sailor in this episode injured only his dignity—he might not be so fortunate the next time. ☹

The author's e-mail address is
mthibault@safetycenter.navy.mil.

Photo by LCdr. Tom Binner