

Lashing Cage Operation

One of the most dangerous jobs unloading a container ship is releasing the twist locks which help secure containers stowed above deck. This is a very physical and manual operation and can be done in a number of ways. This time-lapse shows port workers inside a man cage unlocking semi-automatic twist locks.

Many terminals use a man cage – also known as a lashing cage or gondola - for this process, to keep the port workers safe. The cage is designed around the structure of a 40ft container, which can be lifted by the quay crane's spreader and moved along the container rows and bays.



Twist locks, along with lashing rods and lashing bridges secure containers stowed above deck to reduce the risk of them being lost overboard during a voyage. During the loading operation twist locks are inserted into the four bottom corner castings of a container on the quayside. The twist lock is then automatically engaged when the container is lowered into position on the ship. Securing its four corner castings to those of the container below.

Before this container can be unloaded, the four twist locks must be unlocked. Port workers do this using a long pole to pull the toggles on each twist lock to disengage the locking mechanism from the lower container.

In this example there are three port workers in each man cage – two are unlocking the twist locks while the third is communicating with the quay crane operator who is carefully positioning the cage over each container that needs to be released.

Once the twist locks are disconnected and any other lashings removed unloading can begin. The twist locks remain connected to the upper container, as it's transferred to the quayside where the twist locks are removed and placed in the ship's gear bins.

Key Terms

- Bay
- Corner casting (fitting)
- Gear bins (ships gear bins)
- Lashing cage (man cage / gondola)
- Overboard
- Quay (quayside)
- Row
- Spreader
- Twist lock

Glossary

Bay

Cross-sectional area of a ship or yard block used for stowing containers – part of the slot location referencing system

Corner casting (fitting)

The fitting located at each corner of a container used to secure the container for lifting, during transport or storage

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The fitting located at each corner of a container used to secure the container for lifting, during transport or storage

Gear bins (ships gear bins)

Storage units for twist locks which are transferred onto the quay during (un)loading operations

Gondola (lashing cage / man cage)

A protective platform with mesh walls attached to a spreader to transport port workers so they can access container stacks on a ship to perform lashing operations

Lashing cage (man cage / gondola)

A protective platform with mesh walls attached to a spreader to transport port workers so they can access container stacks on a ship to perform lashing operations

Man cage (lashing cage / gondola)

A protective platform with mesh walls attached to a spreader to transport port workers so they can access container stacks on a ship to perform lashing operations

Overboard

When an individual or cargo goes over the side of a ship into the water

Quay (quayside)

Area between the container yard and the waterfront - used to support the loading and discharge of ships

Quayside (quay)

Area between the container yard and the waterfront - used to support the loading and discharge of ships

Row

Vertical stack of slots along the length of block or in a bay – part of the slot location referencing system

Ships gear bins (gear bins)

Storage units for twist locks which are transferred onto the quay during (un)loading operations

Spreader

A device which is attached to a quay crane or other handling equipment to lift containers, hatch covers and sometimes other types of cargo

Twist lock

Device which is inserted in the corner casting of a container for securing and lifting purposes - it is turned or twisted to lock or unlock