

SYNOPSIS

On 10 August 2000, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was notified of a fatality on board the 11.19m potting vessel *Dunan Star* that day.

While shooting for dog whelks 1½ miles south-west of the Isle of Arran, a crew member became entangled in the back rope of a fleet of pots and was dragged overboard.

The weight of the fishing gear dragged him under the water. Although the skipper pulled the victim back to the surface using the pot hauler, he was unable to reach the part of the rope that was caught around his leg. However, after cutting a section of rope he could reach, the skipper was left with the inboard end of rope and the crewman was again dragged under.

The rescue services were scrambled to the scene and the victim's body was recovered 30 minutes later. It was still entangled in the fishing gear.

The crewmember had been involved in a similar accident just two days before this one.

Contributory causes of the accident were:

- The lack of a safety measure to prevent the crew from coming into contact with the back rope during shooting operations.
- The casualty's inexperience.
- The skipper's failure to recognise that the previous accident had shown the shooting operation to be unsafe, and so adopt an alternative procedure.
- The lack of a risk assessment, which should have identified the risks involved so that the appropriate control measures could be taken.

The investigation has resulted in two recommendations to *Dunan Star*'s skipper/owners:

- To adopt an alternative deck system, such as a detachable pot/toggle system, which would prevent the crew coming into contact with the back rope during shooting operations.
- To provide the crew with working type lifejackets when working on deck on board their vessels.