

SYNOPSIS



On 19 December 2007, the tug *Flying Phantom* was girted and sank, while acting as a bow tug. She was assisting the bulk carrier *Red Jasmine* during a transit of the River Clyde in thick fog. Three of the tug's four crew were lost; only the mate managed to escape from the tug's wheelhouse and was subsequently rescued.

After *Flying Phantom's* tow line had parted during the capsize, the pilot on board *Red Jasmine* completed the transit to the berth safely, in the thick fog, with only a stern tug to assist him.

The investigation has identified a number of factors which contributed to the accident, including:

- The emergency release system for the towing winch on board *Flying Phantom* had operated, but not quickly enough to prevent the tug from capsizing.
- There were no defined operational limits or procedures for the tug operators when assisting/towing in restricted visibility.
- The routine observed by the tug's crew prior to towing or entering fog was ineffective, resulting in the watertight engine room door being left open and the crew not being used in the most effective manner once the fog was encountered.
- The port risk assessment was poor, and the few control measures that had been put in place after a previous similar serious accident in thick fog proved ineffective.
- The port's reliance on their ISO9001 quality management system audits to highlight safety concerns was fatally flawed.
- The lack of an individual to fulfil the role of "designated person" had resulted in major shortcomings in the port's safety management system being overlooked.
- UK ports appear to have been failing to learn lessons from accidents at other ports.
- The lack of an accepted international industry standard for tug tow line emergency release systems.

Recommendations have been made to the port managers, Clydeport, to review and address their safety management system, specifically including the role of designated person. Lloyds Register has been recommended to take forward a proposal to the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) to develop a standard for tug tow line winch emergency release systems. Svitzer Marine Ltd has been recommended to derive suitable limits and necessary guidelines for operating in restricted visibility. Finally, British Tugowners Association (BTA) has been recommended to highlight to its members the importance of tug crews' emergency preparedness.