



## SYNOPSIS

On 10 October 2009, a fisherman was injured by a falling bridle chain on board the fishing vessel *Olivia Jean* when the port side main trawl wire parted as the trawl beam was lifted inboard. The fisherman sustained chest injuries and was airlifted to hospital.

The wire was not adequately checked by the crew and it probably failed because it was worn and brittle. This was the second time that a crewman on board had been seriously injured as a result of a parting wire, and the fourth time that this vessel's trawl wires are known to have failed. An examination of *Olivia Jean* also found:

- Poorly maintained fishing equipment and no evidence of systematic planned maintenance.
- The vessel failed stability criteria for a number of structural reasons and was being operated in a manner that further reduced stability margins.
- Nine crewmen were on board, despite the vessel being limited to a maximum of six.
- Crew were working long hours, with few breaks.
- Documentation, records and evidence of risk assessment were missing.

From the state of the vessel, and the way in which it was being operated, it could be construed that the owner was showing a total disregard for the safety and welfare of his employees and share-fishermen on board.

Following the accident, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) surveyed the vessel but still permitted her to sail in a condition that exceeded the limitations stated in her stability book. As a consequence, MAIB issued a Safety Bulletin which recommended the owner to immediately cease fishing operations on *Olivia Jean* until the vessel's stability could be verified and approved by the MCA.

The investigation found that previous action taken by the MCA following the foundering of *Harvest Hope* in 2005, and recommendations from the MAIB's analysis of UK Fishing Vessel Safety 1992 to 2006, had not been implemented effectively. Significant weaknesses in the MCA's administration of survey and inspections were evident, and its guidance to industry had diluted a number of safety regulations to the point that they were ineffective.

While safety remains the owner's responsibility, MAIB believes that deep rooted failings in the MCA's procedures require significant policy changes to improve fishing vessel occupational standards and to ensure the safety of fishermen.

A recommendation has been made to the owner of *Olivia Jean* to review the working practices on board his fleet, and to ensure that lessons are learned from this and previous accidents.

The MCA has been recommended to take into consideration the findings of this investigation when assisting the Department for Transport to address MAIB recommendation 2010/112 (MAIB report 6/2010).