

MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 2/99

One man lost from angling boat

PURDY

after it was struck by a large wave off Harwich

17 July 1999

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This document, containing a Safety Recommendation, has been produced for marine safety purposes only on the basis of information available to date.

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 1994 provide for the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents to release information as to material facts at any time during the course of an investigation if, in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable to do so. Similarly, recommendations may also be made at any time during the course of an investigation.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is carrying out an Inspector's Investigation into how a man onboard the angling boat *Purdy* was lost overboard when it was struck by a large wave shortly after the HSS *Stena Discovery* passed it at full speed of approximately 40 knots. The incident occurred off Harwich on 17 July 1999. The MAIB will publish its findings within nine months of the accident and will make the report publicly available.

This Safety Bulletin is issued to report the initial findings of the investigation, to make interim recommendations to reduce the chances of further casualties and to alert small boat users of the potential hazards that might be encountered when operating in shallow water near high speed ferry routes.



J S Lang
Rear Admiral
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

Background

On 17 July 1999 a large wave struck the 10m long angling boat *Purdy* as she was preparing to fish in the vicinity of the Shipwash Bank some 10 miles to seaward of the port of Harwich. The weather conditions were good with slight seas and good visibility. The wave swamped her and washed one of the two crew overboard. Despite an extensive rescue operation his body was not recovered until 12 days later. He had not been wearing a lifejacket.

The investigation into the accident is progressing and details of the causes have yet to be confirmed. MAIB's preliminary conclusion, however, is that the wave was probably caused by the passing HSS ferry *Stena Discovery* as she approached Harwich on a routine passage from the Hook of Holland. She was proceeding at about 40 knots.

Immediate action to avoid a repetition was necessary and, to that end, MAIB consulted with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The following action for MCA has been endorsed by MAIB.

Proposed Action

As an interim solution:

MCA would insist, through the Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate, that Stena Line Holland must:

1. instruct masters of the HSS ferry to change their passage plan and reduce speed to ensure safe entry to Harwich Haven including the reduction of wash on adjacent sandbanks;
2. commence monitoring the wash in the approaches to Harwich Haven to ensure the action taken reduces it to within safe limits.

Additionally, the MCA would:

3. instigate through the Thames Coastguard a marine safety broadcast on VHF radio to warn small boat users of the dangers associated with the wash of the HSS.

Towards a permanent solution:

MCA would:

1. insist, through the Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate, that Stena Line Holland must carry out a full risk assessment of the passage plan with reference to wash and, as a result, propose a route and speed profile that constitutes a permanent solution;

2. liaise with the Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate to ensure that the Permit To Operate and Route Operations Manual are endorsed with the requirement for a full risk assessment with reference to wash and for all likely areas of wash to be identified and action taken to avoid it.

Interim Recommendation

All users of small craft are reminded of the dangers that can arise unexpectedly from the wash of passing vessels. In deciding whether to wear lifejackets, it should be remembered that no harm comes from wearing them in even the most benign conditions and that they may save lives if an unexpected event occurs.

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