

# SAFETY DIGEST

Lessons from Marine Accident Reports

No 1/2007



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# MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is an independent part of the Department for Transport, the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents being responsible directly to the Secretary of State for Transport. The offices of the Branch are located at Carlton House, Carlton Place, Southampton, SO15 2DZ.

This Safety Digest draws the attention of the marine community to some of the lessons arising from investigations into recent accidents and incidents. It contains facts which have been determined up to the time of issue.

This information is published to inform the shipping and fishing industries, the pleasure craft community and the public of the general circumstances of marine accidents and to draw out the lessons to be learned. The sole purpose of the *Safety Digest* is to prevent similar accidents happening again. The content must necessarily be regarded as tentative and subject to alteration or correction if additional evidence becomes available. The articles do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability. The lessons often extend beyond the events of the incidents themselves to ensure the maximum value can be achieved.

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The Editor, Jan Hawes, welcomes any comments or suggestions regarding this issue.

The Safety Digest and other MAIB publications can be obtained by applying to the MAIB.

**If you wish to report an accident or incident  
please call our 24 hour reporting line  
023 8023 2527**

The telephone number for general use is 023 8039 5500.

The Branch fax number is 023 8023 2459.

The e-mail address is [maib@dft.gov.uk](mailto:maib@dft.gov.uk)

**Summaries (pre 1997), and Safety Digests are available on the Internet:  
[www.maib.gov.uk](http://www.maib.gov.uk)**



The role of the MAIB is to contribute to safety at sea by determining the causes and circumstances of marine accidents, and working with others to reduce the likelihood of such causes and circumstances recurring in the future.

Extract from  
**The Merchant Shipping  
(Accident Reporting and Investigation)  
Regulations 2005 – Regulation 5:**

*“The sole objective of the investigation of an accident under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2005 shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”*

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## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AB	– Able Seaman
ARPA	– Automatic Radar Plotting Aid
cm	– centimetre
CO2	– Carbon Dioxide
CPA	– Closest Point of Approach
CPP	– Controllable Pitch Propeller
DPA	– Designated Person Ashore
DSC	– Digital Selective Calling
ECDIS	– Electronic Chart Display and Information System
EPIRB	– Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon
ETA	– Estimated Time of Arrival
FRC	– Fast Rescue Craft
GPS	– Global Positioning System
GRP	– Glass Reinforced Plastic
Hp	– Horse power
ISM	– International Safety Management Code
kW	– kilowatt
“Mayday”	– The international distress signal (spoken)
MOB	– Man Overboard
OOW	– Officer of the Watch
PEC	– Pilotage Exemption Certificate
PI	– Parallel Index
RNLI	– Royal National Lifeboat Institution
SAR	– Search and Rescue
SCBA	– Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus
UHF	– Ultra High Frequency
VHF	– Very High Frequency
XTE	– Cross Track Error

# Introduction

I start this edition of the Safety Digest by returning to the subject of complacency. Nearly all of us who go to sea, be it professionally or for leisure, rapidly become inured to the hazards of what we are doing. The media is largely disinterested in accidents at sea, unless they result in oil spills or BMW motorbikes appearing on beaches. So there is little to remind us of the dangers.

Let me use some early statistics for 2006, emerging from analysis of our database:

Fishing still remains, by a very large margin, the most dangerous occupation in the UK. In 2006, 16 fishermen died in accidents, up from 9 in 2005. Although fishing vessel losses are slightly down, we have still lost a UK commercial fishing vessel on average every 13 days over the last 10 years.

In 2006, 117 merchant vessel accidents were reported to us. Happily, this number is down from the 188 reported to us in 2005. However, numbers of accidental deaths in merchant ships were slightly up.

Twenty four accidental deaths occurred in leisure craft (of all types), plus 4 in hired boats, which technically count as “other commercial” rather than leisure.

The message from these statistics is that none of us can afford to be complacent.

In reading through this edition, I am struck by a common thread in many of the cases in the merchant vessel and leisure sections: teamwork. Nearly all of the collisions and groundings in Part 1 would have been avoided if the bridge crew had been operating as a team. More training is being conducted on Bridge Team Management, but this training often fails to translate into actions at sea. A lookout is a vital member of the bridge team, and should not be ignored; equipment, alarms and other facilities must be utilised to support the watchkeepers; and integrating a pilot into the bridge team is a key element of safe operations in pilotage waters. In leisure sailing, briefing one’s crew on what the plan is; of what could go wrong; and what to do if something does go wrong, is fundamental to safe sailing. Although not applicable to the fishing vessel cases in this edition, the same points apply to the fishing sector.

It doesn’t take much to ruin one’s day at sea – equally, it doesn’t take much thought to stay safe.



Stephen Meyer  
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents  
April 2007