

1. SUMMARY

In the early hours of 7 December 1994 the UK registered passenger vessel CANBERRA, with 1,495 passengers and 931 crew on board, suffered a loss of propulsive and main electrical power. At the time of the incident CANBERRA was seven miles south-east of the Isle of Wight bound for Southampton. The sea was rough and the wind was south-by-west force 8.

Following the change of boiler fuel supply from one set of tanks to another, pressure fluctuations were experienced so that the supply was changed back to the original tanks. The fuel pressure then dropped and main steam pressure was lost. This in turn resulted in the loss of main propulsion motors and all electric power. The emergency generators activated and supplied power for lighting and services.

The Coastguard was alerted by CANBERRA's "SECURITÉ" message; subsequently an Urgency "PAN PAN" signal was broadcast and tugs in the Solent area were alerted.

About half an hour after the loss of main electric power, steam pressure was raised slowly on one boiler, but with CANBERRA still continuing to drift towards the coast, it was decided to anchor the vessel.

Just over two hours after the start of the incident, full electrical power was regained, but weighing of anchors was delayed because one anchor had fouled the cable of the other. The first tugs arrived on scene three hours after having first been alerted, and after successfully weighing and stowing anchors CANBERRA proceeded without assistance to Southampton where she berthed later that morning.

The loss of steam pressure was due to a failure in the fuel oil supply which in most part was due to inadequate procedures and supervision. The investigation also found some weaknesses within the bridge watchkeeping team during the period prior to anchoring the vessel.

There was no loss of life or injury as a result of the incident.