

SYNOPSIS



On 20 April 2001, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was advised that the fishing vessel *Rebecca Kay* had sunk off Bideford Bar Buoy, North Devon.

An investigation into the causes began that day.

After completing a major refit of his vessel, the owner/skipper found that she had suffered minor vandalism while alongside in Bideford. Nothing appeared to have been stolen, so the skipper started the engine and set off single-handedly for the fishing grounds off Baggy Point. Once clear of Bideford Bar Buoy, he increased the engine speed to about 7 to 8 knots, and headed *Rebecca Kay* into a short choppy sea.

When about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north-west of the bar, the skipper noticed that his vessel was rolling quite heavily, so checked the bilge discharge, and started to ease off the speed. The auxiliary electric power failed, and the engine stopped. The bilge alarm sounded, and the electric bilge pump started automatically.

He attempted to reach the engine space, but the combined rolling of the boat, and the fishing gear moving about, made it very difficult and dangerous. All electrical power had been lost, the boat was flooding rapidly and was sinking. The skipper, therefore, donned his lifejacket and jumped overboard, taking with him the EPIRB. *Rebecca Kay* sank shortly afterwards, in about 4 metres of water.

About 5 minutes later another fishing vessel in the area rescued the skipper. Although suffering from the cold and shock, he was otherwise uninjured.

This report makes no safety recommendations.