

SYNOPSIS

On 19 July 2001, the 23m-long wooden fishing vessel, *Vertrauen*, sank 75 miles north-east of Peterhead, after flooding. Her crew of four was rescued. The MAIB was informed about the accident at 1803 that day, and began its investigation four days later.

Vertrauen, built in 1982, was trawling about 75 miles north-east of Peterhead in moderate to good visibility, and wind from the north-north-east, force 5. At about midday, the port net became snagged on a seabed obstruction, so the crew spent the next few hours trying to haul it. Sometime during this period the vessel started to flood. Damage caused by a contact between the port trawl door and the hull is considered to be the most likely source of the ingress, although flooding via the pipework cannot be ruled out.

The flooding could not be contained, so the decision was taken to abandon the vessel. The flooding had affected the batteries for the fixed VHF radio, so the skipper called for assistance using the portable VHF radio. A fast rescue craft, launched off a guard ship from the Scott oilfield, rescued all the crew just seconds before *Vertrauen* sank by the stern. The bilge alarm did not alert the crew to the flooding because the audible signal was not working at the time of the accident. By the time the crew discovered the floodwater, it was too deep for them to be able to locate the source. Had the bilge alarm worked, the flooding might have been identified and dealt with promptly.

The two main bilge pumps were electrically-driven, and were disabled when the floodwater reached the transformer box. The MAIB considers that these two pumps were not independently driven, as required by the regulations and, therefore, recommends the MCA not to accept two electrically-driven bilge pumps as being powered by separate means unless the electricity supply for each is completely self-contained.