

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FISHING ACCIDENT REPORT

Loss of Beam Trawler *Flamingo*



On 7 July 2002, the Belgian beam trawler *Flamingo* sank just inside UK waters to the east of Harwich. Her crew of four was lost.

At 2253, Thames Coastguard was informed of an EPIRB alert from the vessel. She could not be contacted and a search and rescue operation began immediately.

Flamingo's upturned hull was located, and the bodies of two of the four crew members were picked up. Neither was wearing a lifejacket.

The hull drifted with the tide until the following afternoon, when it was attempted to tow her towards a nearby sandbank, with the intention of beaching her. She sank shortly after the tow began.

Flamingo's nets were being cleaned before the catch was brought on board. However, a weight of rocks and shells in the port net caused it to break at a "weak link". This raised the vessel's centre of gravity, reduced her stability, and she capsized as a result.

This tragic accident highlights the inherent dangers associated with beam trawling and the adverse effect on stability when operating fishing gear with derricks raised above the horizontal towing position.

It also illustrates the need for working-type lifejackets to be worn whenever crew members are working on deck. Doing so, might have saved the lives of *Flamingo's* crew.

The MAIB has made a number of recommendations which can be seen overleaf.



Recommendations

The United Kingdom Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Ministère des Communications et de L'infrastructure, Belgium and the Transportation Safety Board, Netherlands, respectively, are recommended to:

1. Advise operators and skippers of beam trawlers of the inherent dangers of the design of the "weak link" connecting the cod end to the trawl net.

Additionally, **Ministère des Communications et de L'infrastructure, Belgium and the Transportation Safety Board, Netherlands**, as the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency already does, are recommended to:

2. Bring to the notice of operators and skippers of fishing vessels engaged in twin beam trawling:
 - (i) Specific advice on the associated risks to stability when operating.
 - (ii) The importance of wearing lifejackets when working on the deck of fishing vessels.

The MAIB's investigation report can found on its website www.maib.gov.uk

Alternatively, a copy of the report will be sent on request.

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