

## SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

### Fishing vessel *Coelleira* (OB 93), stranding and loss, 4 August 2019



### Narrative

At about 0124 on 4 August 2019, while on passage from fishing grounds, the 30m long-liner *Coelleira* grounded on Ve Skerries, a group of low-lying reefs 3nm north-west of Papa Stour on the west coast of Shetland, Scotland. The vessel's 15 crew quickly mustered, donned lifejackets, launched liferafts, and determined that there was no water ingress. The coastguard was informed, and the crew were safely evacuated by rescue helicopter. Attempts by salvors to re-float *Coelleira* were unsuccessful and it was declared unsalvageable. *Coelleira* eventually slid off the rocks into deeper water and sank.

The MAIB investigation identified that:

- The route from the fishing grounds to Scrabster was not plotted on paper charts or in the chart plotter. Instead, the skipper altered the vessel's heading to follow the coastline, using the radar and chart plotter to keep clear of navigational hazards.
- Ve Skerries was possibly not displayed on the chart plotter due to the quality of the chart data, or detected by radar due to the range scale in use.
- The wheelhouse had been unattended for some time when the vessel grounded.
- During the passage, *Coelleira*'s skipper maintained the wheelhouse watch alone and it is possible that his level of arousal and awareness were reduced by fatigue due to a disrupted sleep pattern over the previous 2 weeks, and the time of the day.

## Safety lessons

1. Passage planning is a prerequisite of safe navigation, particularly in unfamiliar waters. Plotting an intended route either on a paper chart or in a chart plotter not only provides an overview of the planned passage, but it also enables all potential hazards to be identified and avoided.
2. Keeping a good lookout does not just require looking out of the window. It also requires tying in what can be seen with what is shown on the chart, and therefore is expected, and adjusting radar displays and chart plotters to ensure that the track ahead is clear.
3. Fishing invariably involves working long and unsociable hours. However, careful management is required to prevent limited opportunities to rest impacting on a vessel's safe operation. The ability to work a watch system that ensures wheelhouse watchkeepers get adequate rest and enable the provision of an additional lookout at night, is an essential factor when determining manning levels.
4. Leaving a wheelhouse unattended is never a good move, no matter for how brief a period.
5. Most fishing vessels rely on electronic chart plotters for marking positions of underwater obstructions, fishing gear and successful fishing tows. Due to the advantage that real time positioning provides, chart plotters are also invariably used for navigation instead of paper charts. However, unless the plotters are loaded with up-to-date electronic charts at appropriate scales, they will not be sufficiently accurate for navigation.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: [www.gov.uk/maib](http://www.gov.uk/maib)

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**Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:**

“The sole objective of the investigation of an accident under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of an such investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

**NOTE**

This safety flyer is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

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