

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

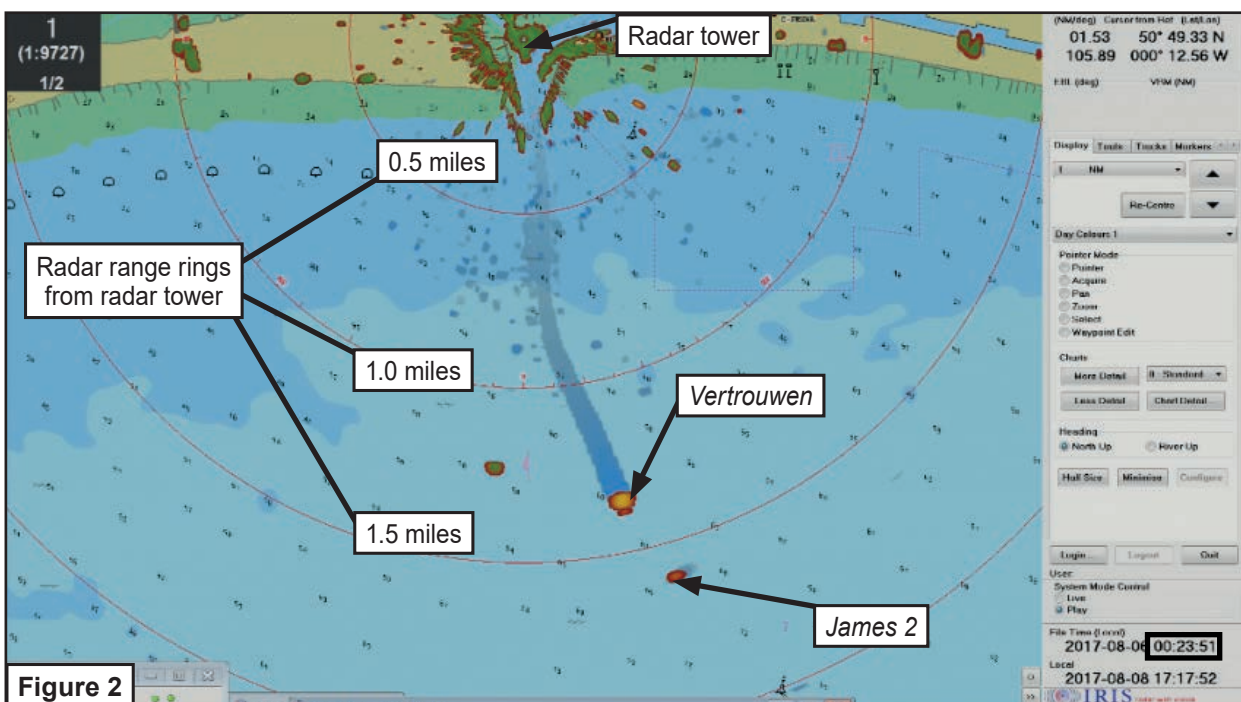
Collision between the fishing vessel *Vertrouwen* and the recreational motor cruiser *James 2* resulting in the sinking of *James 2* and loss of 3 lives at Shoreham-by-Sea on 6 August 2017

Narrative

At 0026 on 6 August 2017, the 26.24m commercial fishing vessel *Vertrouwen* (**Figure 1**) collided with the 5.64m recreational motor cruiser *James 2* in Sussex Bay, 1.6 miles south-east of Shoreham harbour. Both vessels were undamaged by the impact but *James 2* was swamped by *Vertrouwen*'s wash and sank. Three of the men on board the motor cruiser drowned; a fourth was rescued from the water 5 hours later by a passing fishing vessel. *Vertrouwen* had just left port and was on passage to Grimsby; *James 2* was drifting with the wind and tide while the four men on board were rod fishing for mackerel.



The collision occurred because *Vertrouwen*'s lone watchkeeper did not see *James 2* either visually or by radar and, by the time the sea anglers realised they were in danger of being run down, they were unable to get out of the way. That night, visibility was very good and the sea was calm, but *James 2* might not have been visible from *Vertrouwen*'s wheelhouse because the motor cruiser was not showing a masthead light and sternlight, or an all-round white light. *James 2* was almost stationary, but was presenting a strong echo on the port authority's radar (**Figure 2**) and *Vertrouwen* had two newly installed radars that were operating on the 6-mile range scale.



Vertrouwen was displaying the correct navigation lights for a vessel of its size, but in addition, its forward-facing dredge deck floodlights (**Figure 3**) on both sides of the vessel were switched on. Also, just prior to the collision, and for a while afterwards, the skipper was engaged with his mobile phone using social media. At the time of the collision he was using a laptop facing aft to compose his E-log departure report.

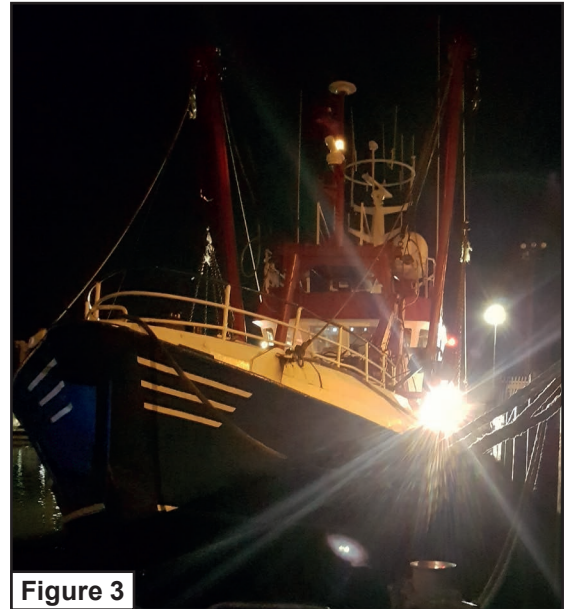


Figure 3

The investigation report concluded that:

- Neither vessel was maintaining a proper lookout: the lone watchkeeper on board *Vertrouwen* was distracted immediately prior to and during the collision; the sea anglers were focused on enjoying a social evening night fishing and did not keep a lookout.
- *James 2* was presenting a good radar echo and should have been identifiable on *Vertrouwen*'s radar screens. However, *Vertrouwen*'s skipper was not systematically checking the radar picture. Further, *James 2* would have presented a small, stationary close by target that might have been hard to detect on a 6-mile range scale.
- The brightness of *Vertrouwen*'s illuminated deck floodlights would have impaired the lone watchkeeper's night vision and, when observed from ahead, would have made its navigation lights less distinguishable to other vessels.
- The sea anglers' chances of survival would have been significantly improved had they been able to raise the alarm and been wearing lifejackets or buoyancy aids.

Safety lessons

1. Maintaining a safe navigational watch is critical to the avoidance of accidents at sea. In its Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 313(F), the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) emphasized, to fishing vessel operators, the importance of keeping a proper lookout and warned of the dangers associated with lone watchkeeping and distractions. In particular, distractions such as mobile phones, computers and televisions in the wheelhouse should not be allowed to interfere with the keeping of a proper and effective lookout.
2. Radars are an effective aid to navigation that can supplement a visual lookout. However, to be effective, the selection of appropriate range scale and the use of target plotting are critical.
3. At night, deck lights will create backscatter from deck equipment and housings that can impair a lookout's night vision. They can also mask navigation lights and so confuse observers from other vessels. Deck working lights should only be shown when absolutely necessary, and should be switched off at all other times.
4. The completion of the mandatory e-log departure report should be undertaken prior to the vessel sailing. Working on computers in the wheelhouse can be a distraction from keeping a proper lookout, and should be discouraged on board.

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

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