

MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 1/2013

Ejection of family of six from an 8.0m RHIB in the Camel Estuary leading to two fatalities and serious injuries to two people

MAIB

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This document, containing safety lessons, has been produced for marine safety purposes only, on the basis of information available to date.

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 provide for the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents to make recommendations at any time during the course of an investigation if, in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable to do so.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch is carrying out an investigation into the ejection of a family of six from a RHIB on 5 May 2013. The unmanned RHIB subsequently executed a series of tight high speed turns, running over members of the family in the water, causing two fatalities and serious injuries to two people.

The MAIB will publish a full report on completion of the investigation.



Steve Clinch
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

NOTE

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

This bulletin is also available on our website: www.maib.gov.uk
Press Enquiries: 020 7944 6433/3387; Out of hours: 020 7944 4292
Public Enquiries: 0300 330 3000

BACKGROUND

At approximately 1549 (BST) on Sunday 5 May 2013 a family of two adults and four children were ejected from their 8.0m rigid hulled inflatable boat (RHIB) into the water. They were manoeuvring the boat at speed in the Camel Estuary near Padstow, Cornwall, UK.

Some members of the family were subsequently run over by the RHIB, leading to the death of the father and the 8 year old daughter and serious injuries to the mother and the 4 year old son.

INITIAL FINDINGS

At this early stage in the investigation, the mechanism that led to the family being ejected from the RHIB into the water, is not clear.

The RHIB was fitted with a kill cord (**Figure 1**), but this was not attached to the driver at the time of the accident. Consequently, when the driver was ejected from the boat, the kill cord did not operate to stop the engine and the RHIB continued to circle out of control, and at speed. As the RHIB circled, it ran over the family in the water a number of times, leading to the deaths and injuries. A few minutes later a local boatman was able to board the RHIB and bring it under control before further people were hurt.



Figure 1: Boat with kill cord in place

SAFETY LESSON

The kill cord serves only one purpose, to stop the engine when the driver moves away from the controls. To ensure that this tragic accident is not repeated it is essential that all owners and operators of vessels fitted with kill cords:

- Test them regularly to ensure that the engine stops when the kill cord mechanism is operated.
- Make sure that the cord is in good condition.
- Always attach the cord securely to the driver, ideally before the engine is started, but certainly before the boat is put in gear.
- Stop the engine before transferring the kill cord to another driver.

Further information regarding the use of kill cords can be found at

<http://www.rya.org.uk/go/killcord>

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