

SYNOPSIS



At about 1308 on 12 February 2009, a deckhand on board the UK registered scallop dredger, *Maggie Ann*, fell overboard as he was emptying a dredge bag. He had been standing on the port dredge beam, which was suspended and almost level with the gunwale, when the dredge bag lifting becket parted.

Despite the quick reactions of the skipper and crew, the deckhand sank below the sea surface before he could be rescued. He was not wearing a lifejacket. Although an extensive search and rescue operation followed, his body was not recovered. Analysis of evidence based on eye witness accounts suggests that death was most likely due to cold water shock, leading to drowning or cardiac arrest.

The MAIB investigation identified a number of safety issues including: operation of the fishing gear; the practice of not wearing a lifejacket or safety harness; and a lack of understanding of risk assessments.

A recommendation has been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency which seeks to build on existing initiatives designed to improve fishing vessel safety by: expediting the MCA's current work on the use of personal flotation devices by fishermen; ensuring emergency drills and the provision of guidance on risk assessment are undertaken to a consistent standard by all fishing vessel surveyors and inspectors throughout the UK; and the incorporation of guidance into its revision of MGN 265 (F) designed to preclude the need for scallop fishermen to lean outboard of the bulwark during tipping operations.

A recommendation has also been made to the owner, AGR Fishing Company Limited, to improve the safe operation of its vessel, and to the Scallop Association to endorse and promulgate the MAIB flyer which highlights the lessons learned from this tragic accident.