

**MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 3/2008**

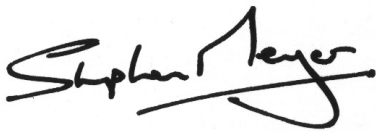
Passenger fatality during disembarkation from a  
Class V passenger vessel on the River Thames  
17 August 2008

## **MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 3/2008**

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

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2005 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.

This Safety Bulletin is issued to ensure, through the relevant certification and licensing bodies, that Class V passenger vessels on the River Thames are being operated to a standard which ensures the safety of their passengers and crew.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Meyer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Meyer  
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

**This bulletin is also available on our website: <http://www.maib.gov.uk>**

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## BACKGROUND

On 17 August 2008, a passenger fell overboard from the Class V passenger vessel *Hurlingham* when attempting to disembark the vessel at Westminster Pier on the River Thames. Despite an extensive search of the river, the passenger's body was not recovered from the river until five days later.

The safe operation of Class V passenger vessels operating on the River Thames and utilising piers in Greater London is governed by the need to comply with the requirements of the UK Domestic Safety Management Code and also a licence agreement issued by London River Services Ltd.



## ISSUE

Preliminary findings of the MAIB's investigation into the causes and circumstances of this accident have raised concerns over the safe operation of Class V passenger vessels operating on the River Thames.

The main areas of concern are as follows:

- Vessel mooring

Strong anecdotal evidence suggests that, notwithstanding general advice to the contrary, the practice of using a single mooring line and engine power to hold a boat alongside is widespread on the River Thames. While this may be adequate in some circumstances it is not appropriate when disembarking large numbers of passengers.

- Passenger control

Like many other Class V passenger vessels on the River Thames, *Hurlingham* operates as a venue for social occasions and the bar is a prominent feature of the boat. In these circumstances it is likely that passengers' judgment and spatial awareness may be impaired due to the effects of alcohol. It is therefore vital that robust procedures are observed to ensure the supervision, control and safety of passengers especially during embarkation / disembarkation.

- Vessel management

All Class V passenger vessels require a valid Domestic Safety Management (DSM) certificate and a Licence to operate from London piers. The initial investigation into this accident has highlighted a number of key areas where the requirements of the DSM certificate and Licence were not achieved.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The **Maritime and Coastguard Agency** and **London River Services** are recommended to:

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- Take urgent action to satisfy themselves that all companies operating licensed Class V passenger vessels on the River Thames have effective systems in place to ensure the safe operations of their vessels in accordance with the Domestic Safety Management Code and the LRS licence agreement.