SYNOPSIS

At approximately 0630 on 19 January 2008 the fishing vessel *Shark* was recovering her long-line when a fire was discovered on board. The fire caused extensive damage to the accommodation and domestic spaces. Four of the crew suffered smoke inhalation.

On 7 January 2008, the UK registered and managed, Anglo-Spanish fishing vessel, *Shark,* left La Coruňa in northern Spain for fishing grounds off the west coast of Ireland. The skipper had served on board for about 1 year, but for many of the 15 crew this was their first trip in the vessel.

At about 2000 on 18 January the long-line was shot way. The crew then rested in their cabins until they were called at 0100 to recover it. At about 0630, thick black smoke was seen coming from one of the crew's cabins, but the smoke detection system alarm had not sounded. Some of the crew attempted to fight the fire but they were quickly beaten back as the thick, acrid smoke quickly spread through the accommodation area. Although a number of watertight doors were left open near to the fire, containment was established. The skipper asked a nearby Spanish fishing vessel to stand by in case they had to abandon the vessel.

The main fire pump could not be started because the electrical control circuits had been destroyed. The emergency manual fire pump was defective, so there was no pressurised water supply with which to fight the fire. As the paint on the main deck started to blister, the skipper attempted to starve the fire of oxygen, but he was hampered by faulty ventilation isolating valves, and had to stuff rags around the ventilation terminals. The rags were later removed, and the fire re-ignited. At 1231 the skipper finally alerted the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) at Madrid, 6 hours after the fire had started. Emergency service support was quickly provided. The Irish Naval vessel, *LE Eithne*, arrived on scene and transferred a fire party, who extinguished the fires. *Shark* was then escorted into Killybegs for inspection.

The fire caused extensive damage throughout the accommodation area. The investigation found numerous examples of private electrical equipment connected to the cabin supplies, and electrical cables were found to be chafed where they passed over the rough edges of the cabin bulkheads. The fire was probably of electrical origin, caused by arcing from a cabin electrical supply cable. The fire detection system had been intentionally disabled, and much of the emergency equipment was in poor condition. *Shark* was also out of date for her Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) Intermediate Survey. None of the crew had the required mandatory safety course certificates, the skipper did not hold the required Certificate of Equivalent Competency and no emergency training drills had been carried out.