

## SYNOPSIS

On 23 January 2008 *Royalist*, a 36 metre UK registered fishing vessel, flooded and sank during fishing operations when approximately 180nm off Dingle, Ireland. *Royalist* was about to shoot her nets when she was hit by a large wave on her port side, which caused her to heel to starboard. The vessel was starting to return to the upright when she was hit by a second wave, after which she took on a permanent list due to the amount of water on her main deck and within an accommodation alleyway. The list increased as water continued to wash over the vessel's submerged starboard gunwale in way of an open net hatch and was able to progress into the engine room and aft accommodation. Although the crew attempted to stem the flow of water by closing the net hatch, the vessel started to sink.

At 1553, the skipper sent distress messages on Inmarsat C and VHF radio channels 13 and 16, and ordered his crew to abandon the vessel into the vessel's two liferafts. The skipper of the French fishing vessel *Damafran*, which was fishing about 5 miles to the south, heard the distress message and immediately cut his nets and headed for the stricken vessel. At 1645, *Royalist's* 18 crew were recovered by *Damafran*. *Royalist* sank by her stern 25 minutes later.

The MAIB investigation identified that the vessel's stability was lost after water penetrated into the accommodation from the main deck through a weathertight door, which had been left open. It also identified a number of safety issues, which did not directly contribute to the accident, but are of concern, including:

- There was no common language understood by the vessel's multi-national crew.
- No familiarisation training or emergency drills had been carried out since the crew joined the vessel.
- The skipper and mate, who were Portuguese, did not hold UK certificates of equivalent competency.
- There was no documentary evidence of the crew having attended any of the four mandatory basic safety courses.
- Risk assessments were written in Spanish and would not have been understood by all of the crew, including the skipper.