

## SYNOPSIS



On 23 November 2007, the 7.34m motor cruiser *Last Call* attempted to leave the port of Whitby. The boat was overwhelmed by the force of the large seas that had developed at the harbour's entrance, and all three of the crew lost their lives.

*Last Call*, a Bayliner 245SB motor cruiser, was purchased second-hand through an independent American brokerage, identified on the internet. It was delivered to Whitby on 12 November 2007, and was sailed for the first time on 17 November in benign weather conditions. The new owner did not arrange for the vessel to undergo the required Post Construction Assessment before being put into service, and it was therefore not compliant with the Recreational Craft Directive.

The decision was made to take the boat to sea for a final outing before recovering it at the local slipway to be stored on a trailer for the winter. Overnight on 22/23 November, a strong northerly wind had created 4m to 5m waves at the entrance to Whitby harbour, a well known local phenomenon. As *Last Call* was departing, personnel at the local RNLI station called the craft on VHF channel 16 to warn the crew of the danger. There was no reply, and *Last Call* continued toward the harbour entrance.

At the harbour entrance, the craft climbed two large waves in close succession. The second wave caused two of the crew, including the skipper, to fall overboard. The craft drifted along the seaward side of the east breakwater extension with the third crew member still on board. While this crew member was reporting the incident to the coastguard, using a mobile telephone, a large wave capsized *Last Call* and she was washed overboard.

The local lifeboat had already launched in anticipation of such an event, and was able to recover the first two crew members. The third was recovered by search and rescue helicopter. Regrettably, all three crew died due to immersion in salt water.

The decision to sail *Last Call* in the prevailing conditions was ill conceived. Without a basic level of seamanship and navigational knowledge, no one on board the boat was able to judge the limitations of *Last Call*, or recognise the dangers they faced.

The investigation found that:

The skipper's and crew's lack of training and qualification in the use and operation of small craft contributed significantly to the accident.

The port information pack produced by Whitby harbour needed to be more comprehensive and include information about the local effects caused by northerly winds.

There are no official instructions or advice for the importers of craft into the UK in respect of their responsibilities under the Recreational Craft Directive.

Recommendations have been made to The British Ports Association, designed to improve the local information provided to leisure craft operators; to BERR to seek from the EU, clarification of the requirements of the Recreational Craft Directive with respect to improved safety standards; to Bayliner and IMCI, to reassess the RCD compliance of the 245SB model and; to the British Marine Federation (BMF), MCA, RNLI and RYA designed to promote appropriate training for operators of leisure vessels.