

SYNOPSIS

Pacific Star sailed from Auckland, New Zealand, in the late afternoon of 10 July 2007. Overnight the ship experienced easterly winds in excess of 90 knots, and a swell height of more than 5 metres. As a result, she suffered damage to internal fittings and to a number of windows in cabins and public spaces, as well as structural damage to the forecastle bulwark and the loss of a satellite communications dome. Significantly, the rough weather also exacerbated pre-existing corrosion damage causing the ship to take water through small holes in her side. Following an underwater survey at her next port of call, Port Vila, Vanuatu, she was instructed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to proceed directly to a dry dock repair facility without passengers, arriving at Brisbane, Australia on 20 July.

Before sailing from Auckland an announcement had been made advising passengers of expected rough weather. Weather forecasts had been closely monitored by the ship's staff, and precautions had been taken to secure the ship for expected storm force winds and large seas.

Once at sea, it became apparent that the wind speeds were far greater than had been forecast, and the master decided to adjust the passage plan so as to keep the wind and sea fine on the starboard bow.

For operational reasons, the forepeak tank was normally part filled with ballast. The coating in the tank had broken down over time and excessive corrosion in way of the internal water line area had resulted in leakage through the hull. The potential for increased corrosion in this area of the tank had not been identified during surveys even though it had been necessary to replace steel work in other areas of the tank. Further leakage had occurred through holes in the shell in way of ventilation ducts. These were designed, built and maintained in such a way that internal visual inspection of the ship's side in this area was impossible.

Recommendations have been made to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) concerning preparation for survey, including accessibility and provision of information to surveyors. A further recommendation has been made to Princess Cruises to review the scope and application of its defect reporting systems.