

SYNOPSIS



At about 1115 on 7 August 2005, a 4.5m RIB with three teenage occupants approached the beach in Abersoch, North Wales. As the RIB passed a line of buoys marking an area in which a 4 knot speed limit had been set by Gwynedd Council, the driver of the RIB reduced to about half throttle, and commenced a slow left-hand turn. During the turn, the console on which the driver was sitting, and to which the steering wheel was mounted, detached from the deck of the RIB. The driver was unable to maintain his balance and fell over the boat's port side and into the sea.

The RIB immediately turned sharply to starboard, and a passenger who had been sitting on the rubber tube to the left of the driver was thrown into the water; he was then struck by the RIB's rotating propeller. A few seconds later, the remaining passenger panicked, and jumped into the water. The unmanned RIB circled in a clockwise direction at a speed of between 10 and 15 knots. Another powerboat in the vicinity saw the accident, and although impeded by the circling RIB, succeeded in passing a line to the people in the water and managed to tow them clear.

The injured passenger sustained deep lacerations to his chest and left side, and was taken to hospital by air ambulance. He remained hospitalised for 3 weeks. The RIB, escorted by a local lifeboat, continued to circle until 1146, when it grounded at the southern end of Abersoch beach.

Several factors contributed to the detachment of the console and subsequent injury to the passenger, including:

- The console fitted to the RIB was designed and shaped for use on another RIB model, and was not the console that had been ordered from the manufacturer by the boat's vendor.
- The console was attached to the RIB using self-tapping screws at an average interval of 30cm. No fixative or bonding agent was used, and the fastenings worked loose over time.
- The dealer did not detect the incorrect supply and fitting of the console before the RIB was passed to its owner.
- The RIB was fitted with a kill-cord, but it was not used by the driver.

Following the accident, the RIB manufacturer has improved the labelling of its products, and has issued written guidance to its dealers regarding the fitting of accessories with self-tapping screws. It has also undertaken to provide an installation manual for all its products. Action has also been taken by the Royal Yachting Association and Gwynedd Council to encourage the use of kill-cords, and by the British Marine Federation to improve the knowledge of its members with regard to the requirements of the Recreational Craft Directive and its harmonised standards.

A recommendation has been made to the British Marine Federation to help ensure that all boat accessories are compatible to the parent hull, and are fitted by methods approved by the manufacturers. A further recommendation has been made to Gwynedd Council with the aim of strengthening its regulation of power driven vessels in its area of interest.

Figure 1



Ribeye Open Tender 450