

SYNOPSIS

While on passage from New York to Southampton, two engine room crew on board the passenger cruise ship *Queen Elizabeth 2 (QE2)* were badly scalded on 23 June 2002, when boiling water suddenly discharged from a pipeline. One of the men subsequently died as a result of his injuries, the other was left seriously hurt.

On 20 June, *QE2* left New York for a 6-day transatlantic passage to Southampton. During this passage, the port auxiliary oil-fired boiler was being prepared ready for survey in Southampton. The preparation involved all the boiler mountings being removed and stripped down for inspection.

The accident happened when Edgar Villasis (motorman) and Nelson Venzal (wiper) were in the process of cleaning the port boiler main steam stop valve. Hot water and steam suddenly and unexpectedly discharged from the opened body of the valve, and covered both men.

The casualties were treated on board *QE2*, and were then airlifted to hospital as soon as the ship came into helicopter range. Edgar Villasis subsequently died.

Later inspection and testing revealed that the isolating valve to the engine room steam ring main was leaking at the time of the accident. It is thought that this led to localised heating of trapped condensate in the isolated steam line, which resulted in some of the condensate boiling and escaping through the dismantled steam stop valve.

Recommendations have been made to the vessel's owner, Cunard Line, and to the International Association of Classification Societies, regarding the provision of adequate drainage arrangements for steam pipelines to this, and future, steam systems. Additional recommendations have been made to Cunard Line to ensure that safety issues are fully recognised and addressed both by management ashore and also by engineers on board its vessels.