

## SYNOPSIS



On 20 April 2002, a crew member from the fishing vessel *Osprey*, fell from a ladder between the vessel and Lochinver quay. He drowned.

*Osprey* was returning from fishing for prawns in the North Minches, off the Scottish coast. Her skipper decided to land the catch at Lochinver quay and collect a new net, so he called Lochinver harbour office to tell them of his intentions. When the vessel arrived at the harbour later that day, the quay was quiet, there was no-one around. The skipper decided to unload his catch first before seeking help with the new net. Conditions were calm, and although it was dark, the quay and vessel were both lit.

As the vessel approached the market quay, her skipper swung the stern in, and applied some stern thrust to check her forward motion. One of the crew members stepped off the gunwale and on to a quay ladder to enable him to receive mooring lines on the quayside. As he neared the top, he fell into the water, between *Osprey* and the quay.

Although close to the quay, the crew member was unable to grab the ladder, so the skipper, seeing the difficulty he was in, threw him a lifebuoy. The crew member could not reach it so the skipper tried again, once more without success. The skipper, therefore, attempted to move the vessel closer, but as he did so, a second crew member entered the water to rescue his colleague, having first removed his outer clothing. The second crew member swam to the lifebuoy, and took hold of his colleague who, by that time, was unconscious. Both men were dragged back to *Osprey* where, with difficulty, they were pulled on board. CPR was administered to the casualty.

After several unsuccessful attempts to resuscitate the casualty, the skipper rang the emergency services using his mobile telephone, knowing that an ambulance was parked close by. After further futile attempts to revive him, the skipper moved *Osprey* around to some concrete steps to provide the paramedics (who had still not arrived) easier access. Using the radio, he then called the coastguard, who began to co-ordinate the rescue effort. A local coastguard and lifeboat man arrived on the scene and took over until the paramedics arrived, some 20-25 minutes later. The crew member was pronounced dead 10 minutes later.

The reason for the crew member falling from the ladder must be speculative. Although it complied with the regulations (Dock Regulations 1988) its ergonomic design was poor and might have led to the fall. However, it is a common design of ladder and the skipper had previous experience of far worse landing facilities.