

SYNOPSIS



While the 15.8m Grimsby-registered stern trawler *Gemma Fidelis* was fishing the grounds 9 miles east of the River Tees, a member of her crew was fatally injured.

The MAIB was informed of the accident on 23 October 2001 and an investigation began that day.

Two members of the four-man crew were aft at their stations while the fishing gear was being hauled. A third was operating the winch, and the skipper was in the wheelhouse.

When the trawl doors were heaved clear of the water, the winchman stopped the winch, and the deckhands began the operation of “dogging -up” the doors. The crewman on the starboard side began passing the dog chain between the trawl door and the securing brackets. Just as he was doing so the trawl wire came free from the snatch block, through which the trawl wire was leading, and caught him across the right side of his body, crushing him against the aft gunwale. The snatch block was being operated in the open condition. The snatch block was supporting the weight of both the trawl door and the trawl itself.

Before the remaining deckhands could attempt to free the casualty, he was dragged over the side when the skipper reversed the winch in an effort to release him. When the crew retrieved him back on board they were unable to revive him. The extent of his injuries were fatal.

The causes and contributing factors were:

- The starboard snatch block being operated in the open condition.
- The casualty and the surviving crew’s complacency in their acceptance of an unsafe procedure.
- The crew’s attitude towards safety, and their lack of any safety awareness training.
- The lack of effective control measures to adequately reduce the identified risk.
- The ambiguous nature of the control measure stated in the risk assessment document.

Recommendations have been addressed to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and the owner, Mr A Locker of Lockers Trawlers Ltd. These can be seen in Section 4.