

SYNOPSIS



Atlantic Princess is one of the largest fishing vessels registered in the UK. She is a 92m long stern trawler with a crew of 34, a mixture of British, Netherlands and Lithuanian nationals. During the evening of 23 November 2000, she was shooting her nets in the English Channel, about 17 miles south of the Isle of Wight, when one of her Netherlands deck crew fell overboard. It was dark and the sea was moderate, with a moderate to fresh breeze.

In spite of the alarm being raised promptly, and a relatively accurate position being used for the search, he was not recovered.

During the search and rescue operation, performed by a coastguard helicopter, several surface vessels and co-ordinated by MRSC Solent, the crewman's lifejacket was recovered. It was of the automatically inflating type and, although it had not been serviced according to manufacturers' recommendations, it was found fully inflated, with its automatic light illuminated and with its harness buckle fastened.

Another type of lifejacket was available to the deck crew. This was fitted with a beacon which is activated by sea water. Its signal activates an alarm in the vessel's wheelhouse and aids the electronic location of the wearer.

Although there was no witness to the crewman falling, it is concluded that he was probably dragged over the vessel's stern by the stern roller which rotates when the nets are being shot over the stern. It is also concluded that he had not properly donned his lifejacket, and as a result it slipped off after he fell.

The owner of *Atlantic Princess* is recommended to:

- give training demonstrations to all crew on the correct use of all types of lifejackets on board the vessel. These should be repeated routinely.
- compile and maintain a comprehensive inventory of all lifejackets on the vessel in order that their custodian, servicing and repair history can be clearly and reliably identified at any time.
- require the deck crew to use beacon-equipped lifejackets while shooting gear. The long-term objective should be that they are also worn at other times.
- consider fitting a short guardrail at the aft end of each small pound, just forward of the stern roller of the vessel.