

MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 3/2000

Small passenger ro-ro vessels

Bow visor opening/closing procedures

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This document, containing Safety Recommendations, has been produced for marine safety purposes only on the basis of information available to date.

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 1999 provide for the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents to make recommendations at any time during the course of an investigation if, in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable to do so.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is carrying out an investigation into the fatal accident of a crew member on board the ro-ro ferry *Fivla* on 16 July 2000. A report will be published.



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Background

The *Fivla* is a small passenger ro-ro ferry operated by the Shetland Islands Council plying between the Islands of Yell and Unst. She has a crew of five.

Fivla has a bow visor which is raised immediately prior to berthing, and lowered just after leaving the berth for the short passage across Bluemull sound.

Shortly after berthing recently one of the crew noticed the engineer lying over a hatch at the bow and just inboard of the bow visor. Unaware there was a problem he went to talk to his colleague and discovered he had suffered a head injury which he assumed had been caused by the bow visor as it was being lowered.

An investigation is underway to establish what might have happened but there is nothing to indicate the engineer was working in the area when the accident occurred. There were, for instance, no tools in his vicinity. The safety chain fitted between the car deck and the working area was, however, lying on the deck.

The visor is visible from the bridge but only by someone standing at the bridge front. It does not have an alarm system and can only be operated from the wheelhouse console. It takes approximately 35-40 seconds to close. There are no written instructions regarding the visor operating procedures but there is a manufacturer's notice on the wheelhouse console which instructs the operator to check the area is clear before lowering it. The instructions make no mention of monitoring the area while the visor is being lowered.

The precise cause of the accident is still being investigated.

Safety Recommendations

Although the safety chain has been replaced with a more substantial safety barrier, the Shetland Islands Council is recommended to introduce the following measures on *Fivla* and similar vessels:

1. Ensure that someone visually monitors the visor at all times while it is being raised or lowered.
2. Provide an emergency stop for immediate use by whoever is monitoring the visor movement, if the monitoring is made from a location away from the wheelhouse.
3. Consider installing visual and audible alarms to indicate the raising/lowering of bow visors.

Operators of other small ro-ro ferries are recommended to note the above and take whatever measures they judge necessary to prevent something similar happening.