

SYNOPSIS

At 0338 UTC on Saturday 22 January 2000, the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) Pentland, notified the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) of a fire on board the fishing vessel *Be Ready*. The situation was monitored throughout the weekend, and on Monday 24 January an investigation began, when the vessel was towed into Lerwick.

Be Ready is a 24m fishing vessel operating out of Scalloway, Shetland. She has a regular crew of either four or five operating on back-to-back fishing trips. She left Scalloway on Monday 17 January, with a crew of four, for the fishing grounds 60 miles west of Shetland, returning briefly the following Thursday for a new set of trawl boards plus an additional deckhand. She then returned to the same area and re-started trawling.

At about 0215 on the Saturday morning, 22 January, the vessel was trawling slowly in a north-easterly direction, when the mate, who was on watch, discovered a fire in the galley. The skipper and crew were called and gathered in the wheelhouse, passing the galley on their way. Although all saw the fire through the open galley door, nobody shut the A60 fire door. A short abortive attempt was made to fight the fire, but by that time the accommodation itself was starting to burn. The skipper called the coastguard on the VHF, told them of the fire, but lost direct contact. He attempted to stop the main engine, but the controls failed to respond. The coastguard asked Kirkwall lifeboat to launch, and a rescue helicopter to get airborne at 0219. Using a "Mayday Relay", local contact was made with fishing vessels in the area, and communication re-established with the casualty.

Having realised that the fire was beyond their control, *Be Ready*'s crew launched both liferafts. With the vessel still going slowly ahead, both liferafts were lost when they became entangled with the trawl wires aft. The crew of five then moved forward and waited for the rescue vessels, maintaining contact via a hand-held VHF set. Weather conditions were force 8, rough seas with wintry showers.

The fishing vessel *Mizpah* was first on scene, followed by the helicopter. The helicopter tried twice to get a Hi-line aboard, but conditions were too bad. *Mizpah* then made two close passes, bow to bow, managing on the second attempt to pass a line connected to a liferaft to the casualty. Once the liferaft was alongside the bow, the crew entered the liferaft using a rope ladder over the starboard side. With all five aboard, they moved away from the burning vessel and were then lifted into the helicopter and taken to Lerwick hospital for a check-up. Apart from minor burns and bruises, there were no injuries.

The galley fire is thought to have been caused by a drying cloth hung above a hot heating element on the cooker. Once alight, and fanned by strong draught from an open window into the starboard side shelter deck and an open door on the port side, the fire rapidly gained strength and entered the accommodation.

When the fire had burnt itself out, the tug *Anglian Monarch* boarded and towed *Be Ready* to Lerwick. She was alongside by 0930 on Monday 24 January 2000.