

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FISHING ACCIDENT REPORT

The Loss of *Solway Harvester*



On the evening of 11 January 2000 the 19.43m Scottish scallop dredger *Solway Harvester* was reported as missing. The weather was very bad at the time.

Following an extensive search, the wreck of *Solway Harvester* was found in a depth of 35 metres, 11 miles south-east of the Isle of Man. All of her seven crew had drowned.

Subsequent events included an underwater survey, the recovery of the bodies by the Isle of Man authorities and, eventually, the salvage of the vessel herself. MAIB inspectors carried out extensive interviews, a very detailed examination of the wreck and a range of model tests.

All the evidence indicates *Solway Harvester* began to take water into her fish hold through open ice scuttles while she was making way during the late afternoon of 11 January 2000. She was, at that time, heading for shelter in the lee of the Isle of Man. It was a foul night, and a strong south-westerly wind was blowing. She stopped and, with the way off her, came beam to sea and started to roll heavily. The floodwater in the fish hold reduced her stability to such an extent that she became vulnerable to a capsize. The heavy rolling in large waves caused her cargo of bagged scallops and loose gear to shift and this, together with the reduced stability, caused her to capsize at about 1745.

The investigation found that her bilge alarm was not functioning before the accident. Without this, it is probable that those on board were unaware she was taking water into the fish hold until, probably, a few minutes before the accident. It also found that the bilge pumping arrangements were not working as intended.

With about 6 to 9 tonnes of water in her fish room, evidence of a shift in weight on board, the failure of her watertight integrity and the effects of heavy rolling meant she lost her stability. A capsize was inevitable.

Recommendations have been addressed to owners and skippers to correct identifiable shortcomings, which when implemented should improve fishing vessel safety. These recommendations can be seen overleaf.



Recommendations

Owners and skippers of UK fishing vessels are recommended to:

1. Check that any liferaft carried is in date for servicing and correctly attached.
2. Check that anyone sailing in their vessels who was born after 1 March 1954, has completed the mandatory safety training. If it is found that they have not, such training should be arranged as a matter of urgency.

Owners of fishing vessels are recommended to:

3. Engage a suitably qualified marine safety expert to undertake a comprehensive review of safety management throughout the company. The aim should be to produce an effective safety management system for its vessels and crews.
4. Ensure that any crew member employed on any of its vessels has attended the three mandatory short safety courses in first-aid, survival and fire-fighting.
5. Inspect vessels in its fleet to ensure the protective covers over the fish room slush wells are in working order. The company should also ensure that its skippers and mates fully understand the importance and function of these items.
6. Revise the arrangement on any vessel in its fleet, so that either the bilge suction strainers in the fish room are easily accessible or vessels are equipped with portable diesel-driven salvage pumps.
7. Review the operations of its vessels with regard to the stowage of spare gear and fishing gear to ensure that these items can be properly secured against movement, and issue the appropriate instructions to its skippers in this regard.
8. Review its stores policy, in the light of its risk assessments, to ensure spares for critical safety equipment such as bilge alarm sensors, are readily available.
9. Equip with bilge alarms the fish rooms and large volume shaft tunnels on all vessels.

All fishing skippers and their crews are strongly advised to read the summary report and recommendations. These can be found on the MAIB website at www.maib.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can telephone 023 8039 5500 to ask for a copy.