MAIB
MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Fishing vessel *JMT*, capsize and sinking with the loss of two crew 9 July 2015

Narrative

During the afternoon of 9 July 2015, routine contact was lost with the skipper and crewman on board the 11.4m scallop dredger *JMT* that was fishing off Plymouth, UK. A search and rescue operation was initiated the following morning when the vessel did not return alongside as expected. The body of the crewman was found floating in a life-ring; he was not wearing a lifejacket. The wreck of the vessel was located 3.8 miles off Rame Head and was later recovered. The skipper was not found.

The MAIB investigation identified that:

- *JMT* capsized and sank at around 1501 on 9 July 2015; the weather was good at the time, with slight seas.
- The vessel had only 25% of the reserve of stability required by larger fishing vessels.
- The vessel's stability had been adversely affected by structural modifications and by aspects of the vessel's operation.
- Capsize was possibly triggered by emptying the starboard dredges while the port dredges and their contents remained suspended.
- The crew's likelihood of survival was reduced by not having the opportunity to broadcast a distress message, release the EPIRB from its stowage, lifejackets not being worn and the failure of the liferaft to surface.

Safety Lessons

1. Structural modifications that increase top weight and raise a vessel's centre of gravity (winches, bigger gantries, higher lifting points etc), will reduce its stability. The extent of this reduction can only be determined through a full stability assessment.

2. When fishing, suspended loads, keeping the catch on deck, low fuel levels and not closing hatches and doorways have the potential to jeopardise a vessel's stability.

3. Small fishing vessels are not required to meet stability criteria. However, simplified methods of assessing stability, such as the Wolfson Mark, can at least provide a basic indication of safety at very little cost.

4. The crew did not use the 'constant wear' lifejackets that were available on board. Neither survived.

5. The liferaft's HRU activated, but it probably didn't surface because the canister became trapped by the vessel's superstructure. Finding a place to put a liferaft on small fishing vessels where it will not get damaged, interfere with the fishing operation and have a clear route to the sea surface in the event of capsize is not always easy. However, it warrants very careful and serious consideration.

6. It took over 18 hours for the crewman to be found because the EPIRB was kept in the wheelhouse and was not float-free. The fitting of a float-free EPIRB would have alerted the coastguard almost immediately and would have dramatically increased the likelihood of the crew's survival.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: www.gov.uk/maib

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