

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Fishing vessel *Ardent II* (INS 127), fire while alongside, 16 August 2016



Figure 1: *Ardent II* on fire

Narrative

At approximately 0500 on 16 August 2016, a fire started in the crew mess room of the fishing vessel *Ardent II* while alongside in Peterhead (**Figure 1**). The three crew sleeping on board escaped without injury but the vessel was extensively damaged.

On 11 August, *Ardent II* returned from fishing and moored in Peterhead harbour. The vessel's machinery was shut down and shore power was connected, enabling three of the crew to live on board while the vessel was in port.

The vessel was scheduled to conduct guardship duties the following week so the crew prepared for the inspection that was to be conducted prior to putting to sea. On 15 August, various contractors were on board conducting repairs and inspections. The vessel's engineer was also on board working in the engine room.

By 1800, the contractors had all left and the three crew who lived on board cooked their dinner using a rice cooker in the crew mess room and a small oven in the galley. By 2345, all three crew were in bed, with the engineer still working in the engine room. He finished work and went home at approximately 0230, locking the door from the wheelhouse onto the upper deck as he left. All other doors and hatches were secured from the inside to prevent intruders.

At about 0515, one of the crew exited the accommodation and entered the crew mess room on his way to the toilet/washroom. He immediately became aware of the presence of black smoke and a smell of burning plastic. He alerted the other two crew, who then exited the accommodation into the crew mess room, unfastened the watertight door and passed through the doorway into the aft net drum space and then onto the quay. The crewman who had raised the alarm entered the wheelhouse, opened the wheelhouse door window, unlocked the padlock using a key from his pocket, opened the door, and passed onto the upper deck and then onto the quay.

At 0537, the emergency services were called after the three crew, who had escaped with none of their possessions, alerted the crew of a nearby fishing boat. Flames were seen emitting from the watertight doorway between the crew mess room and the aft net drum space. At 0546, the first fire appliance was on scene and the fire service continued to tackle the blaze until the following day. By this time, the vessel was extensively damaged and was later declared a constructive total loss.

Safety lessons

1. On examination, it was determined from the fire patterns and other evidence that the most likely source of the fire was an electrical multi-socket adapter (**Figure 2**), which supplied a domestic freezer in the crew mess room. Fishing vessel owners and skippers have a responsibility to ensure electrical equipment is maintained in a safe condition. Regular visual inspection of electrical equipment to check for bare wires, that appropriate fuses are in place, and for signs of burning, together with regular Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), would provide an effective means for reducing the risk of electrical fires.
2. It was fortunate that one of the crew awoke and discovered the fire shortly after it had started. In the absence of a smoke detector in the crew mess room, this alerted the crew to the fire and triggered them to evacuate the vessel without delay. Fires can start from various sources, and only by installing a comprehensive fire detection and alarm system that covers all spaces that pose a risk will a fishing vessel crew be confident of being alerted early enough to be able to take effective action.
3. Crew living on board a fishing vessel are exposed to particular risks which must be considered and addressed by the owner. In addition to ensuring that a fire detection and alarm system remains energised while alongside, the issue of access to the vessel in an emergency is something that should be taken fully into account before allowing crew to live on board. These and other factors are listed in relevant current guidance provided in Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 413 (F) – Voluntary Code of Practice for Employment of Non European Economic Area (EAA) Fishing Crew and MGN 425 (M+F) – Assessment of Risks for those sleeping on “Dead Ships”.

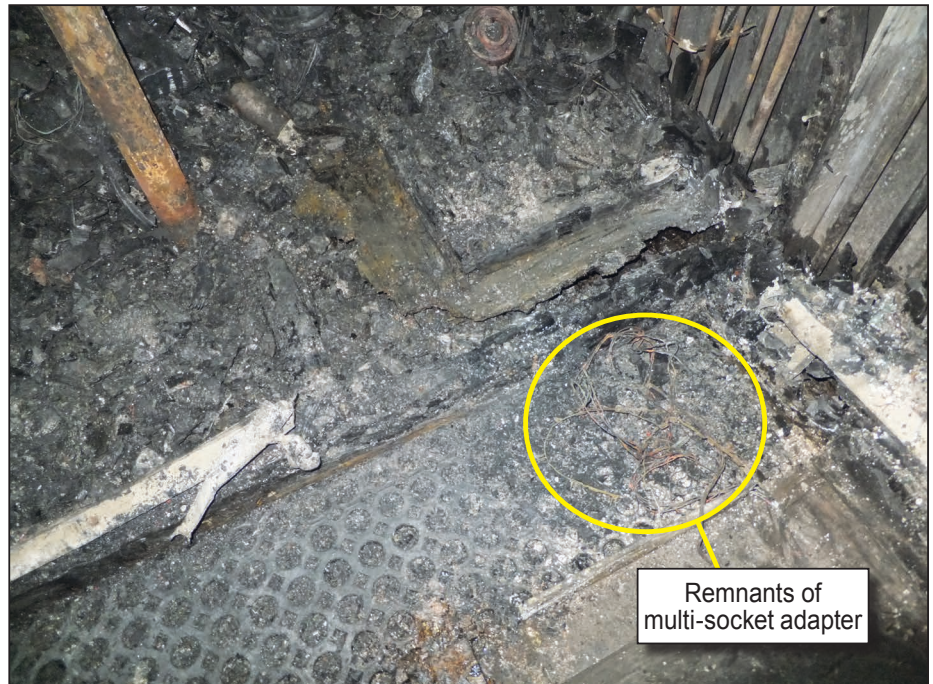


Figure 2: Remnants of multi-socket adapter

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