

SAFETY FLYER TO SEA ANGLERS

The sinking of the recreational motor cruiser *James 2* and loss of 3 lives following its collision with the fishing vessel *Vertrouwen* 1.6 miles south of Shoreham-by-Sea on 6 August 2017

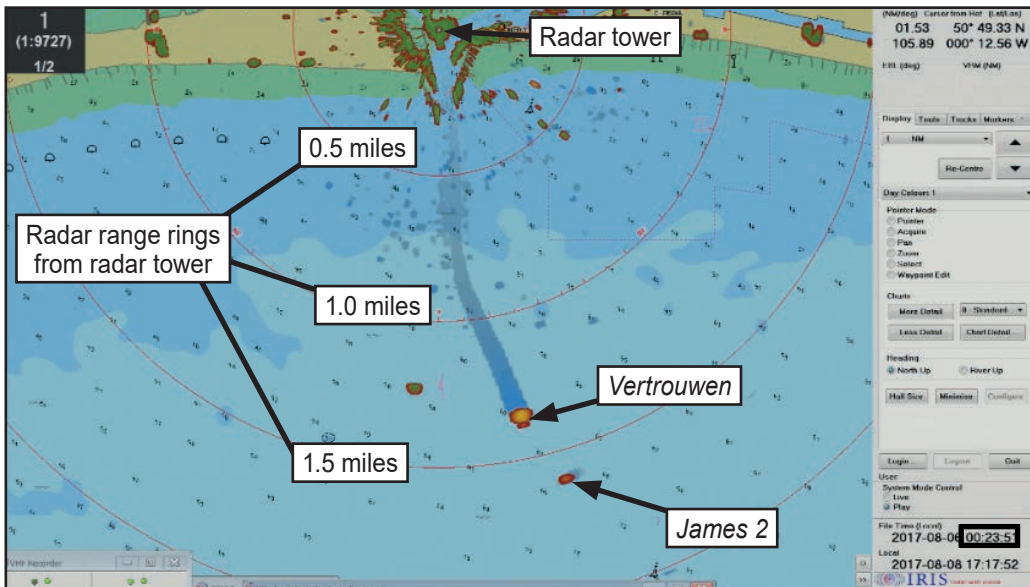


Figure 1: Scene of accident as captured by Shoreham Harbour radar

Narrative

At 0026 on 6 August 2017, the 5.64m recreational motor cruiser *James 2* and the 26.24m commercial fishing vessel *Vertrouwen* collided in Sussex Bay, 1.6 miles south-east of Shoreham harbour (Figure 1). Both vessels were undamaged by the impact but *James 2* was swamped by

Vertrouwen's wash and sank (Figure 2). Three of the men on board the motor cruiser drowned; a fourth was rescued from the water 5 hours later by a passing fishing vessel. *James 2* was drifting with the wind and tide while the four men on board were rod fishing for mackerel; *Vertrouwen* had just left port and was on passage to Grimsby.

The collision occurred because *Vertrouwen's* lone watchkeeper did not see *James 2* and, by the time the sea anglers realised the danger they were in, they were unable to get out of the way. *James 2* sank because it did not have the internal subdivision or built-in buoyancy necessary to keep it afloat in the flooded condition. The three sea anglers drowned because they were not wearing personal flotation devices (PFDs) (lifejackets or buoyancy aids) and were unable to raise the alarm; the fourth sea angler was extremely fortunate to have survived. The investigation concluded that:



Figure 2: *James 2* being recovered

- Neither vessel was maintaining a proper lookout: the lone watchkeeper on board *Vertrouwen* was distracted immediately prior to and during the collision; the sea anglers had been drinking and were focused on enjoying a social evening night fishing, and they therefore did not keep an effective lookout.
- *James 2* did not have the navigation lights required for a vessel of its type and size and might not have been visible from *Vertrouwen's* wheelhouse.
- *James 2* and the four sea anglers were ill-prepared for going to sea:
 - The motor cruiser had inadequate freeboard in way of the outboard motor, and had no means of pumping out flood water (Figure 3).

- The motor cruiser was not carrying distress flares and the sea anglers were not wearing PFDs.
- None of the sea anglers had undertaken any formal maritime safety training for operating the boat offshore or at night, nor for the operation of its marine VHF unit.
- The sea anglers' chances of survival would have been significantly improved if they had been wearing PFDs and had been able to raise the alarm.



Figure 3: *James 2* - showing low freeboard in way of the outboard motor

Safety lessons

1. Had the sea anglers on board *James 2* been keeping a lookout, they might have spotted the danger posed by *Vertrouwen* much earlier and been able to take effective evasive action. The keeping of a good lookout and assessing the risk of collision is a vital part of safe boat operation.
2. *James 2* did not have an all-round white light (or masthead light and sternlight), which meant it was not visible to vessels approaching from its stern. All vessels operating at sea during the hours of darkness must show the correct navigation lights for their type and size.
3. *James 2* had a section cut out of its transom to enable easy access to the outboard motor, and for it to be tilted out of the water when not in use. This reduced the boat's freeboard and made it much more susceptible to flooding. A board should have been fitted to the inboard side of the transom to increase the freeboard and prevent water ingress. Owners should ensure that their boats have sufficient freeboard at all times to reduce the risk of swamping.
4. By the time the survivor was found, the alarm raised, and the search commenced, it was too late to save the other three sea anglers. Given the water temperature, had they been wearing PFDs, their chances of survival would have been greatly increased. The importance of wearing a PFD when on the water in a small craft cannot be overstated.
5. The sea anglers on *James 2* were unable to raise the alarm effectively. Had the coastguard been alerted to the sinking by a VHF "MayDay" call, a GMDSS alert, the use of flares or the triggering of a personal locator beacon, search and rescue assets such as lifeboats and helicopters could have been dispatched quickly and effectively. All boat owners should consider how they could raise the alarm in the event of an emergency.
6. The sea anglers also drank alcohol before and during their fishing trip. Alcohol, even in small quantities, can impair judgment, night vision, and reaction times. Ashore, it is accepted practice that the nominated driver does not drink, and this approach should be adopted when embarking on sea angling trips by boat.

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

For all enquiries:
Marine Accident Investigation Branch
First Floor, Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1GH

Email: maib@dft.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 023 8039 5500

Publication date: March 2018