

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

“The sole objective of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

As the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the accident date, this interim report is published, pursuant to Regulation 14(2)(b) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012.

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

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Interim report on the investigation into the capsizing and sinking of the tug *Biter*, resulting in the loss of two lives, while assisting the passenger vessel *Hebridean Princess* off Greenock, Scotland on 24 February 2023

The information contained in this interim report is based on the various aspects of the investigation completed to date. Readers are cautioned that there is the possibility new evidence may become available that might alter the circumstances as depicted in this report.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

At about 1527 on 24 February 2023, the twin screw conventional tug *Biter* girted and capsized while attached to the stern of the passenger vessel *Hebridean Princess*, which was in the main Clyde Channel making its approach to James Watt Dock, Greenock, Scotland. After the accident, the tug's upturned hull remained afloat for approximately 35 minutes before sinking; its two crew were unable to escape from the vessel and lost their lives.

INVESTIGATION

The MAIB's investigation has considered various aspects of the accident to determine the causes and circumstances surrounding *Biter's* capsizing and sinking and why its two crew lost their lives, including the tug's towing arrangements; its watertight integrity; the training and experience of personnel involved; and the management of towing operations within the port.

ONGOING ACTION

The MAIB investigation is complete, and a draft of the report is being prepared and will be distributed to stakeholders for a 30-day consultation period in due course.

Image courtesy of Hebridean Island Cruises Ltd



Biter

Image courtesy of Kevin Kelway (Dorcas Media)



Hebridean Princess

VESSEL PARTICULARS		
Vessel's name	<i>Biter</i>	<i>Hebridean Princess</i>
Flag	UK	UK
Classification society	The Society of Consulting Marine Engineers and Ship Surveyors	Lloyd's Register
IMO number/fishing numbers	Not applicable	6409351
Type	Twin screw workboat/tug	Passenger vessel
Registered owner	Clyde Marine Services Limited	Hebridean Island Cruises Limited
Manager(s)	Clyde Marine Services Limited	Northern Marine Ship Management Limited
Year of build	Steel	Steel
Construction	1982	1964
Length overall	16.25m	71.63m
Registered length	16.25m	67.1m
Gross tonnage	28.7	2,112
Minimum safe manning	2	13
Authorised cargo	None	Passengers

VOYAGE PARTICULARS		
Port of departure	Greenock, Scotland	Greenock, Scotland
Port of arrival	Greenock, Scotland	Greenock, Scotland
Type of voyage	Internal waters	Internal waters
Cargo information	None	None
Manning	2	40

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION		
Date and time	24 February 2023, at approximately 1527	
Type of marine casualty or incident	Very Serious Marine Casualty	
Location of incident	Off Greenock	
Place on board	Wheelhouse	Not applicable
Injuries/fatalities	2 fatalities	None
Damage/environmental impact	Constructive total loss	No damage
Ship operation	Towing	Manoeuvring
Voyage segment	Arrival	Arrival
External/internal environment	Wind northerly, Beaufort force 2; sea state 2; good visibility; high water; slack tidal stream	
Persons on board	2	45