

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Flooding, capsize and foundering of the stern trawler *Piedras* (FD528), 78 nautical miles south-west of Mizen Head, Ireland on 1 June 2022



Piedras

Narrative

At 1234 on 1 June 2022, the UK registered stern trawler *Piedras* capsized and sank about 78 nautical miles south-west of Mizen Head, Ireland, following an uncontrolled ingress of seawater into the engine room that started during fishing operations. The crew first became aware of the flood at about 0600, but the source of the flooding was not determined and their attempts to pump out the floodwater were unsuccessful.

The skipper of *Piedras* had contacted a nearby fishing vessel *Armaven Uno* and, over 2 hours into the flood, sent an undesignated distress message via the Global Marine Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). Deciding that the vessel was lost, the skipper of *Piedras* gave the order to abandon ship. The abandonment was hampered as one of its two liferafts failed to function correctly. Fortunately, the second liferaft was successfully deployed and used by the 11 crew members. By 0949, the crew of *Armaven Uno* had rescued the entire crew of *Piedras* from the liferaft. *Piedras* eventually capsized and sank to the seabed.

Safety lessons

- 1. The crew of *Piedras* were alerted to the flood by the engine room bilge alarm but recovered their trawl before fully investigating the flood source. Floods are dangerous and should be dealt with immediately; early identification of a flood source provides the best opportunity to stop the leak and pump out floodwater. Securing watertight doors and hatches in the closed position can help to keep a vessel afloat, even if one compartment is flooded. The Fishermen's Safety Guide¹, published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, details what actions to take in the event of a flood.
- 2. The skipper of *Piedras* sent the initial requests for help using WhatsApp, which limited the options for assistance and rescue to just one vessel. Sending an early distress message via GMDSS gives the best opportunity to alert rescue teams and receive external help and resources such as salvage pumps. Very high frequency radio calls and the use of handheld, parachute, and smoke flares can be an efficient way of indicating distress to nearby vessels that might have missed the original GMDSS messages.
- 3. The multinational crew of *Piedras* crew were unable to understand the vessel's safety documents, including risk assessments, which were not available in their native language. It is essential that safety critical information can be understood by everyone on board.

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

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NOTE

This safety flyer 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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¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fishermens-safety-guide