

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As the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the accident date, this interim report is published, pursuant to Regulation 14(2)(b) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and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 of the fatal injury to a recreational diver with the recreational diving support boat *Karin* in Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, Scotland on 28 September 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

On the morning of 28 September 2023, a recreational diver carrying out decompression stops died, almost certainly as a result of being struck by the rotating propeller of the UK registered diving support boat *Karin*. The victim had been diving from a second dive boat that was also supporting divers exploring the wreck of the German battleship SMS *Markgraf*, which was lying at a depth of 45m in Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, Scotland.



Karin alongside North Pier, Stromness Harbour, Orkney Islands

INVESTIGATION

The MAIB's investigation has considered all aspects of the accident to determine the causes and circumstances, including analysis of the operation of the boat in close proximity to divers in the water, the actions of the submerged divers and the oversight of recreational diving within Scapa Flow.

ACTIONS TAKEN

In June 2024, the MAIB issued a safety bulletin (SB2/2024¹) highlighting the need to maintain an effective lookout at all times when a vessel is underway, which is vital when operating near people in the water, and for detailed and frequent communication between skippers/operators when multiple boats intend to operate in the same area. The safety bulletin also urged divers to follow good practice guidance for correct handling of a delayed surface marker buoy as recommended by the British Sub-Aqua Club.

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.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/maib-reports/safety-warning-issued-following-contact-between-a-diving-support-boat-and-a-recreational-diver-with-loss-of-1-life>

VESSEL PARTICULARS	
Vessel's name	<i>Karin</i>
Flag	UK
Classification society	Not applicable
IMO number/fishing numbers	Not applicable
Type	Recreational diving support boat
Registered owner	Johns Diving Charters
Manager(s)	Johns Diving Charters
Construction	Wood
Year of build	1945 (approximate)
Length overall	24m
Gross tonnage	68.65
Minimum safe manning	2
Authorised cargo	Not applicable
VOYAGE PARTICULARS	
Port of departure	Stromness, Orkney Islands, Scotland
Port of arrival	Stromness, Orkney Islands, Scotland
Type of voyage	Recreational diving expedition
Cargo information	Not applicable
Manning	2
MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION	
Date and time	28 September 2023 at 0936
Type of marine casualty or incident	Very Serious Marine Casualty
Location of incident	Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, Scotland
Place on board	Propeller
Injuries/fatalities	External injuries, one fatality
Damage/environmental impact	Not applicable
Ship operation	Recreational diving support
Voyage segment	Mid-water
External & internal environment	Daylight; good visibility; smooth seas; light winds
Persons on board	11