

SAFETY FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Double man overboard resulting in one fatality from the potting vessel *Weston Bay* (GY123), approximately 12 nautical miles south-east of Spurn Head, England on 22 May 2024

Narrative

At about 0820 on 22 May 2024, two deckhands went overboard from the potting vessel *Weston Bay* in moderate sea conditions while the vessel was deploying its pots approximately 12 nautical miles south-east of Spurn Head, England. *Weston Bay's* crew were able to recover one deckhand (deckhand 1) on board, but their efforts to recover the other deckhand (deckhand 2) were unsuccessful. About 40 minutes after entering the water, deckhand 2 was recovered by another vessel but was unresponsive and could not be resuscitated despite emergency first aid efforts.



Weston Bay

The accident happened when the inexperienced deckhand 1 was struck and knocked onto the deck (see **figure**) while downstacking a string of shooting pots and was taken overboard by the next pot in sequence. Deckhand 2 entered the water as he went to assist.

Weston Bay's crew recovered deckhand 1 from the water in less than 10 minutes using the improvised emergency rescue ladder. However, this method was ineffective in assisting deckhand 2 who had succumbed to the effects of cold incapacitation and was unable to assist in his recovery. During the recovery efforts, deckhand 2's personal flotation device (PFD) had become separated from him and he consequently had no support in the water.

The investigation found that the shooting system used on *Weston Bay* did not ensure that crew were physically separated from the shooting gear in line with the guidance provided in the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Fishermen's Safety Guide. *Weston Bay's* crew did not conduct regular manoverboard drills and did not have an effective man overboard (MOB) recovery system to recover an unconscious person from the water.

Safety lessons

1. Careful consideration of the self-shooting arrangements, including the number of pots and their method of stacking, can remove the need for crew interaction, which in turn reduces the crew's risk of entanglement with the running back rope. It is essential that crew remain separated from the back rope and pots at all stages of the shooting operation. This requires a safe shooting method to be established for the protection of the crew.
2. The deployment of MOB recovery equipment is one of the first actions taken during drills. However, as no recent drills had been conducted on board *Weston Bay* the crew were unfamiliar with the equipment and unaware of its limitations. The ineffective recovery equipment impeded the ability of the crew to recover deckhand 2 while he was still conscious. It is vital to practice realistic MOB scenarios to ensure an effective and prompt response in a real situation. The early deployment of effective recovery equipment in this case would likely have significantly improved the deckhand's chances of recovery and survival.

- The wearing of a PFD in line with the manufacturer's instructions when there is any risk of entering the water increases the chances of survival as it will keep an unconscious person's airway clear of the water.
- Potting is one of the most hazardous fishing methods, Of the 47 MOB occurrences from UK potting vessels reported to the MAIB between 2013 and 2023, 55% resulted in fatalities. By considering and implementing some or all of the invaluable suggestions in publications, such as the MCA's Fishermen's Safety Guide and the Seafish FS45 Potting Safety Industry Advisory Note, fishermen can create a safer working environment and gain a more informed approach to hazards and emergency preparedness. Further guidance is also available via the Fishing Industry Safety Group's Home and Dry safety campaign website¹.

For illustrative purposes only: not to scale

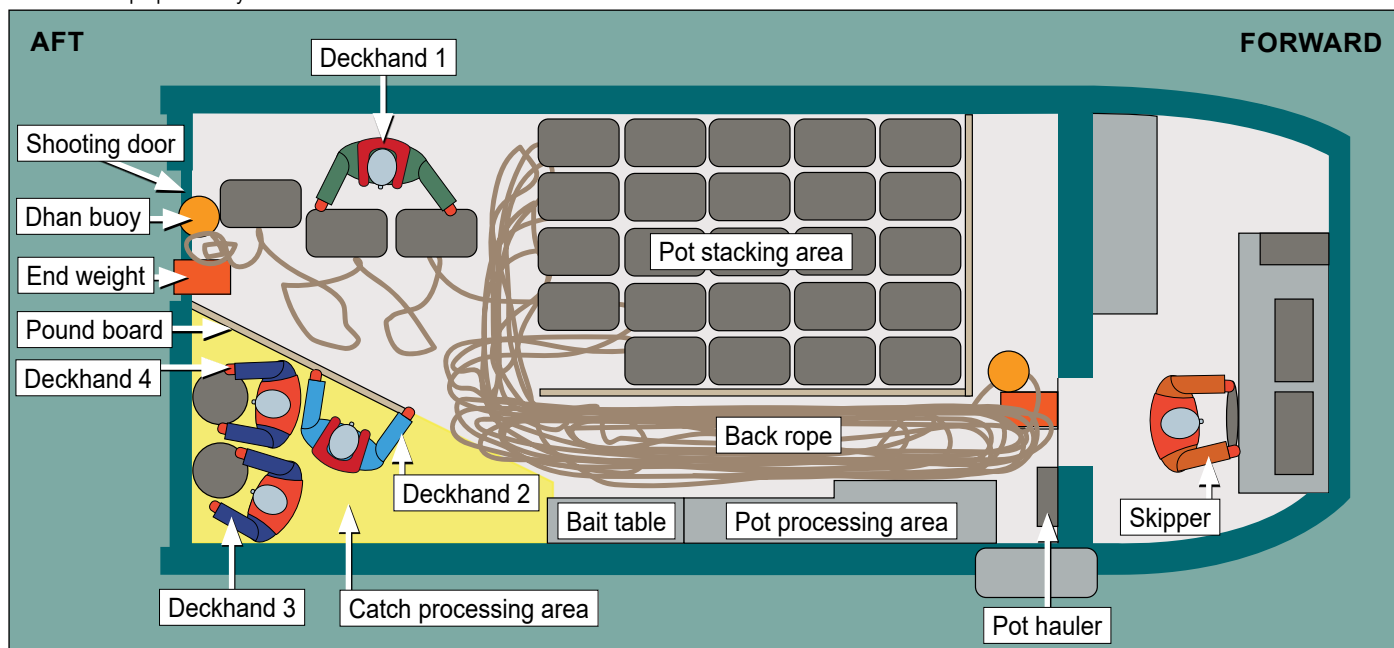


Figure: Crew positions at the shooting stations

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

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NOTE

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¹ [Home and Dry safety campaign](http://www.homeanddry.org.uk)