



# **UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

**REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION  
INTO THE  
COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL MY POSSUM  
(TX8210KF) LOSS OF TWO LIVES IN LAVACA  
BAY, TX ON JUNE 1, 2024**



**MISLE ACTIVITY NUMBER: 7929906**

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

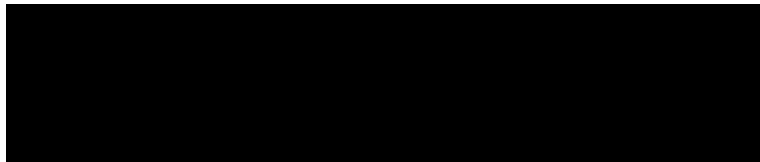
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16732/IIA #7929906  
16 June 2025

**CAPSIZING AND SUBSEQUENT SINKING OF THE COMMERCIAL FISHING  
VESSEL MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF TWO LIVES  
WHILE TRANSITING THE MATAGORDA SHIPPING CHANNEL IN LAVACA  
BAY, TEXAS ON JUNE 1, 2024**

**ACTION BY THE COMMANDANT**

The record and the report of investigation completed for this marine casualty have been reviewed by the Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analyses, and conclusions are approved. This marine casualty investigation is closed.



E. B. SAMMS

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard

Chief, Office of Investigations & Casualty Analysis (CG-INV)



16732

**JUN 11 2025**

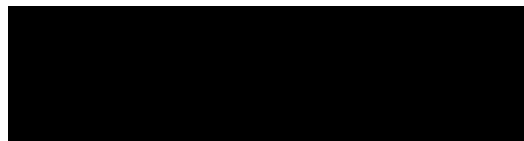
**COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) LOSS OF TWO LIVES  
IN LAVACA BAY, TX ON JUNE 1, 2024**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE COMMANDER,  
EIGHTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT**

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

**COMMENTS ON THE REPORT**

1. The loss of the operator and deckhand was a tragic and preventable accident. I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the mariners who lost their life.
2. The investigation and report contain valuable information which can be used to address the factors that contributed to this marine casualty and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.



**J. E. FOTHERGILL**

Commander, U.S. Coast Guard  
Chief of Prevention  
Eighth Coast Guard District  
By Direction

**U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security**

**United States  
Coast Guard**



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16732  
September 17, 2024

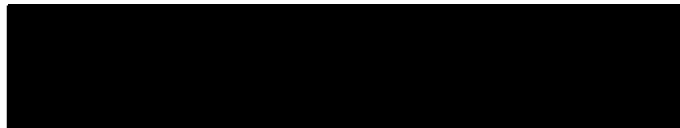
**COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) LOSS OF TWO LIVES  
IN LAVACA BAY, TX ON JUNE 1, 2024**

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE OFFICER IN CHARGE, MARINE INSPECTION**

The record and the report of the investigation convened for the subject casualty have been reviewed. The record and the report, including the findings of fact, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations are approved subject to the following comments. It is recommended that this marine casualty investigation be closed.

**COMMENTS ON THE REPORT**

1. I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Benedicto Jaramillo and Angel Jaramillo. It is my hope that this investigation will contribute to preventing future tragedies in the realm of commercial fishing vessel operations.



Torrey H. Bertheau  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard  
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection

Enclosures: (1) Executive Summary  
(2) Investigating Officer's Report



16732  
September 1, 2024

## **COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) LOSS OF TWO LIVES IN LAVACA BAY, TX ON JUNE 1, 2024**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On June 1, 2024, at approximately 0430 CST, Commercial Fishing Vessel MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) and Commercial Fishing Vessel JETLA (TX6401KB) departed from a harbor in Port Lavaca, southbound via the Matagorda Ship Channel, to Indianola and Port O'Connor to fish for croaker. MY POSSUM was crewed by two individuals: a father, the Operator, and his son, the Deckhand, with plans to fish until 1000 CST on the same day. At approximately 1000 CST, the master of the JETLA observed dark clouds on the horizon and called his wife for a weather check. His wife informed him that there was a forecast for inclement weather including gusts up to 40 mph. The master of the JETLA immediately called the master of the MY POSSUM and told him to haul up their gear and head back to the harbor as quickly as possible. Both vessels retrieved their gear and began to head back when at approximately 1018 CST, the MY POSSUM was beset by a storm and the vessel capsized, and sank, approximately 40 feet of water, in the middle of the Matagorda Shipping Channel. The Coast Guard along with the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas General Land Office conducted search and rescue for the two crewmembers. On June 2, 2024, at approximately 0755 CST, search and rescue efforts were suspended. On June 3, 2024, Tow Boat US, recovered the vessel from the bottom and removed it from the Matagorda Shipping Channel. On June 4, 2024, the owners had the vessel towed back to the docks in Port Lavaca, TX. On June 4, 2024, at approximately 1800, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Wardens and Calhoun County Sheriff's Office personnel found and recovered both bodies while conducting a shoreline search. A Justice of the Peace attended the scene, pronouncing both victims deceased, with the cause of death determined to be accidental drowning. The Justice of the Peace provided an affidavit of facts stating that no foul play being suspected, there was no autopsy or toxicology ordered.

As a result of the investigation, the Coast Guard determined the initiating event as the vessel capsizing due to inclement weather. The subsequent events were the sinking of the vessel followed by two people entering the water, which resulted in their deaths by drowning. Causal factors contributing to this casualty were: 1) Failure of operator to beach the vessel, 2) No reasonable defense to prevent vessel from sinking after capsizing, 3) No reasonable defense for personnel entering the water, and 4) Failure of operator and deckhand to wear a personal flotation device.



16732  
September 1, 2024

**COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL MY POSSUM (TX8210KF) LOSS OF TWO LIVES  
IN LAVACA BAY, TX ON JUNE 1, 2024**

**INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT**

**1. Preliminary Statement**

1.1. This marine casualty investigation was conducted and this report was submitted in accordance with Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 4.07, and under the authority of Title 46, United States Code (USC) Chapter 63.

1.2. No individuals, organizations, or parties requested or were designated as a party-in-interest for this investigation in accordance with 46 CFR Subsection 4.03-10.

1.3. The Coast Guard was the lead agency for all evidence collection activities involving this investigation. Because this investigation involved the loss of lives, the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS) provided technical assistance as required. The Texas General Land Office (TGLO) was on-scene for pollution response; Texas Parks and Wildlife assisted in the search for the two victims; and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) surveyed the Matagorda Ship Channel after the vessel was salvaged and removed. No other persons or organizations assisted in this investigation.

1.4. All times listed in this report are approximate, and in Central Standard Time using a 24-hour format.

## 2. Vessel Involved in the Incident



Figure 1. Undated Photograph of MY POSSUM pre-incident provided by owner's wife on June 6, 2024



Figure 2. Photograph of MY POSSUM post-incident provided by USCG on June 6, 2024

Official Name:	MY POSSUM
Identification Number:	TX8210KF
Flag:	United States
Vessel Class/Type/Sub-Type	Fishing Vessel/Fish Catching Vessel/Trawler, Side
Build Year:	1982
Gross Tonnage:	14 GT
Length:	39.9 feet
Beam/Width:	Unknown
Draft/Depth:	Unknown
Main/Primary Propulsion: (Configuration/System Type, Ahead Horse Power)	Diesel (400 Ahead Horse Power, 10 Astern Horse Power)
Owner:	[REDACTED]
Operator:	[REDACTED]

### 3. Deceased, Missing, and/or Injured Persons

Relationship to Vessel	Sex	Age	Status
Operator	Male	50	Deceased
Deckhand	Male	15	Deceased

### 4. Findings of Fact

#### 4.1. The Incident:

4.1.1. On June 1, 2024, at 0430 hours, the MY POSSUM and the JETLA were underway fishing for croaker. The MY POSSUM was in Matagorda Bay (between buoy marker 39-43) with two persons on board, the Operator and Deckhand.

4.1.2. At 0940, the Operator of the JETLA called his wife because he was concerned about some bad weather on the horizon. She informed him there was a storm in the area. He then called the MY POSSUM and told them to haul their gear and head back as quickly as possible to avoid the weather. At 1000, both vessels had finished retrieving their gear and were underway back to Port Lavaca. The JETLA eventually lost sight of the MY POSSUM as by this time the storm had descended on their location.

4.1.3. At 1018, 42 knot gusts of wind whipped through Matagorda Bay near Burnpile weather station.

4.1.4. At 1018, the MY POSSUM overturned between buoy markers 58 and 60.

4.1.5. At 1112, Calhoun County notified the Coast Guard of the overturned vessel.



4.1.6. At 1200, the MY POSSUM was at marker 56 when it completely submerged in 40 feet of water in the Matagorda Ship Channel.

4.1.7. Coast Guard Station Port O'Connor's launched a small boat, and a Coast Guard helicopter was diverted to assist in the search for the two persons on board. Texas Parks and Wildlife and Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) vessels arrived on-scene to assist with the search.

4.1.8. On June 2, 2024, at 0755, the search was suspended.

4.1.9. At 1134, DPS divers dove the wreckage and reach the threshold of the wheelhouse door. However, they could not visibly or physically confirm any objects at the threshold.

4.1.10. On June 3, 2024, MY POSSUM was successfully lifted from the seafloor and drawn to shallower water out of the ship channel near Indian Point and Magnolia Beach for further salvage. The wheelhouse sustained major damage and the occupants were not found inside.

4.1.11. On June 4, 2024, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Wardens performed an airboat search along the northern shoreline of Cox Bay. The Game Wardens located the Deckhand's body at approximately 1700 hours. The Game Wardens located the Operator's body approximately 300 yards away from the Deckhand at approximately 1900 hours.

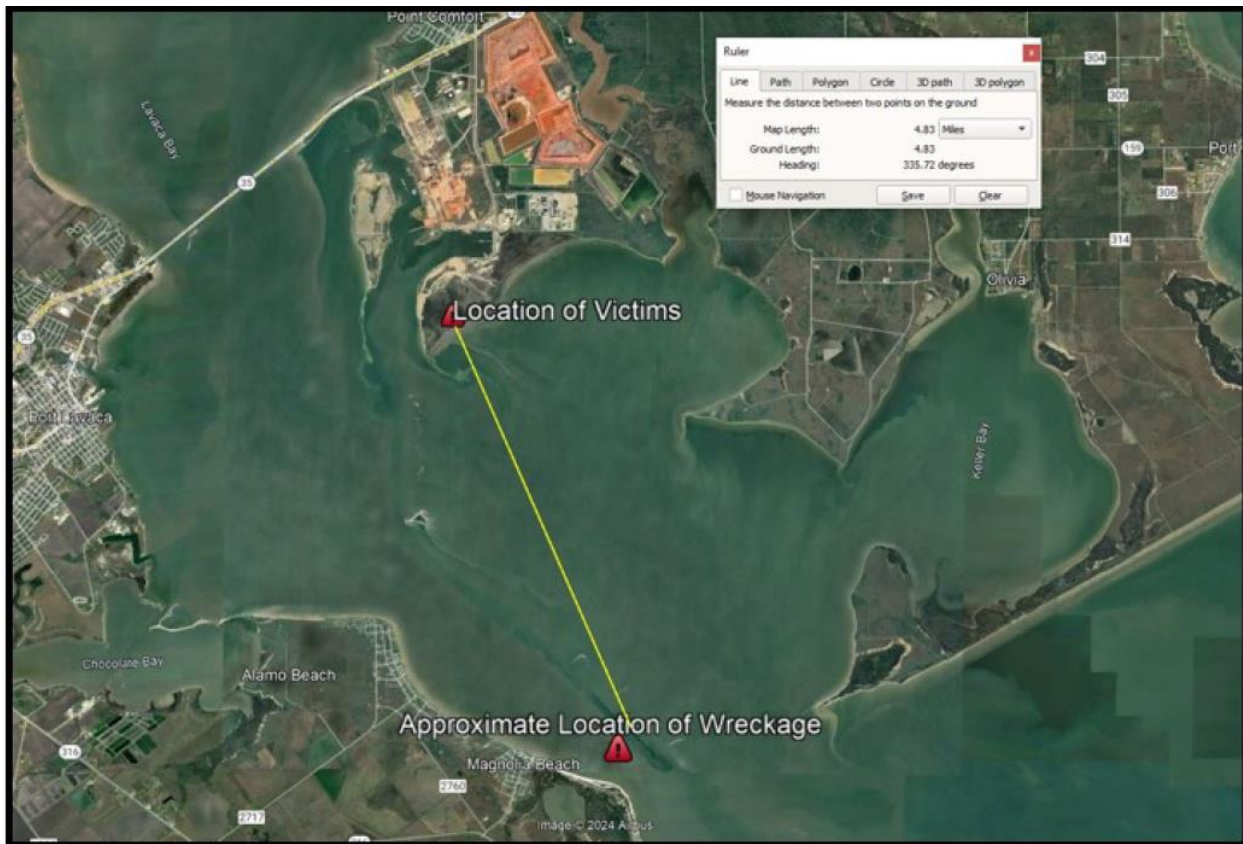


Figure 3. Photograph of where the victims were found in relation to the where the incident occurred, provided by TP&W on June 4, 2024.

4.1.12. At 2000, on June 4, 2024, the Justice of the Peace arrived on scene and determined the causes of death as accidental drownings. No autopsy or toxicology reports were ordered. Victoria Mortuary Service took custody of the deceased.

#### 4.2. Additional/Supporting Information:

4.2.1. On-scene weather prior to the arrival of the storm was an air temperature of 84 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds were out of the NNE at 13 knots with gusts up to 20 knots and increasing. Wave height was 1 to 3 feet. Visibility was 10 nautical miles.

4.2.2. The Operator worked in the fishing industry for over 30 years and operated MY POSSUM for 6 to 8 years. The Operator had no formal training and did not hold any merchant mariner credentials, nor was he required by regulations to possess any. The MY POSSUM primarily operated in Matagorda Bay.

4.2.3. The Deckhand was a companion working alongside the Operator on the MY POSSUM. The Deckhand did not hold any merchant mariner credentials nor was required to have them for his position on the vessel. The Deckhand had very limited experience with the vessel and equipment on board but occasionally steered the vessel while the Operator was sorting fish or completing other tasks on deck.

4.2.4. The MY POSSUM was an inspected Commercial Fishing Vessel. The vessel last received a fishing examination on October 10, 2022. The vessel was registered in the State of Texas. The vessel had the required number of life jackets (03) on board at time of incident.

### 5. Analysis

5.1. Failure of operator to beach the vessel. When the MY POSSUM and the JETLA set out between 0430 and 0500, the weather was favorable. However, conditions deteriorated rapidly as the day went on. During the return trip to the docks, the Operator chose to navigate through the Matagorda Ship Channel instead of staying close to the shallower waters. If the MY POSSUM was caught in the storm while transiting in shallower waters, beaching the vessel could have prevented it from capsizing. Had the Operator decided to beach the vessel instead of risking a return over deep water, it could have prevented the vessel from capsizing.

5.2. Vessel sank. There were no reasonable defenses to prevent the vessel from sinking after it capsized.

5.3. No defense for personnel entering the water. There were no safety systems required or installed on the MY POSSUM that could have prevented the Operator and Deckhand from entering the water after the vessel capsized.

5.4. Failure to wear life jackets. It was determined that neither the Operator nor the Deckhand were wearing life jackets although there were lifejackets on board. The cause of death as determined by the Calhoun County Justice of the Peace Precinct #5 was drowning. USCG approved life jackets that are worn properly significantly reduce the risk of drowning. If the Operator and the Deckhand had been wearing a life jacket, it is reasonable to believe it could have prevented them from drowning.

## **6. Conclusions**

### 6.1. Determination of Cause:

6.1.1. The initiating event for this casualty was the MY POSSUM capsizing. Causal factors leading to this event were:

6.1.1.1. The Operator failed to beach the MY POSSUM and instead risked navigating in a deep channel during heavy weather.

6.1.2. The subsequent event was the vessel sinking.

6.1.2.1. There were no defenses that could have prevented the vessel from sinking.

6.1.3. The subsequent event was the two persons on board entering the water and drowning.

6.1.3.1. The Operator and Deckhand failed to wear life jackets.

6.2. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by Any Coast Guard Credentialed Mariner Subject to Action Under 46 USC Chapter 77: There were no acts of misconduct, incompetence, negligence, unskillfulness, or violations of law by a credentialed mariner identified as part of this investigation.

6.3. Evidence of Act(s) or Violation(s) of Law by U.S. Coast Guard Personnel, or any other person: There were no acts of misconduct, incompetence, negligence, unskillfulness, or violations of law by Coast Guard employees or any other person that contributed to this casualty.

6.4. Evidence of Act(s) Subject to Civil Penalty: This investigation did not identify any violations that are subject to civil penalty.

6.5. Evidence of Criminal Act(s): This investigation did not identify violation of criminal law.

6.6. Need for New or Amended U.S. Law or Regulation: This investigation identified no potential matters needing new or amended U.S. law or regulation.

6.7. Unsafe Actions or Conditions that Were Not Causal Factors: No unsafe actions or conditions that were not causal factors were identified.

## **7. Actions Taken Since the Incident**

7.1. None.

**8. Recommendations**

8.1. None.



Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Coast Guard  
Investigating Officer