



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector/Air Station Corpus Christi

August 25, 2022
Corpus Christi, Texas

Findings of Concern 013-22

WHEN UNINSPECTED PASSENGER VESSELS (UPVs) GO OFFSHORE, BE WISE, TAKE AN EMERGENCY POSITION-INDICATING RADIO BEACON (EPIRB)

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. A 31-foot uninspected passenger vessel (UPV) was taking on water in the Gulf of Mexico with seven people onboard. The vessel was 22 nautical miles offshore operating in three to four foot seas. In these seas, the vessels low gunwales allowed the deck to become awash. The chop caused vibrations that resulted in the live well supply line below deck to come off, introducing additional water to the bilges. Unbeknownst to the vessel Captain, the bilge pump intake was clogged and unable to keep up with the water ingress for over 30 minutes. Once the crew identified the issue, they were able to successfully repair the pump. Ultimately, the vessel was successfully escorted back to port. Had the flooding remained uncontrolled, the passengers and crew onboard may have had to abandon ship. Without an EPIRB, the vessel had no way to quickly identify it was in distress or its position to search and rescue (SAR) assets.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The vessel had recently undergone work at a repair yard. Workers had mistakenly left a work glove in the bilge of the vessel. Additionally, the live well supply line was not double clamped to the pump. When the one and only hose clamp came off due to vibration, the live well pump pumped sea water into the bilges. The excessive amounts of water in the bilge allowed the glove to float freely where it then became lodged in the suction intake.

UPVs less than 100 GT are not required to carry an EPIRB. However, operators that travel offshore without an EPIRB are potentially putting their passengers at risk in the event of an emergency. These operations have fewer safety requirements and less oversight than inspected passenger vessels. They typically rely on cell phones for communications as they are not required to carry VHF-FM radios. Some cell phones lose signal rather quickly in open water. In the event they must abandon ship, cell phones become even more unreliable if they are immersed in water. The use of properly registered and installed EPIRB is an easy way to ensure rescue authorities are alerted to your distress and location quickly.



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Ensure vessel bilges are kept clean to reduce the likelihood of trash or other debris from clogging the bilge pump.
- Double clamp all hose attachments to ensure they are not easily vibrated loose.
- Consider registering and installing an EPIRB for the safety of the vessel and passengers, especially when operating beyond 3 nautical miles from shore.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Sector/Air Station Corpus Christi Investigations Division by phone at (361) 939-5140 or by email at CorpusChristiIO@uscg.mil.