



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Sector San Diego

November 9, 2020
San Diego, CA

Findings of Concern 008-20

LOOKOUTS ON OVERNIGHT SMALL PASSENGER VESSELS

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. On a fall evening in 2018, in offshore waters with fair weather, good visibility and calm seas, a northbound inspected small passenger vessel collided with a southbound foreign flagged mega-yacht. This casualty occurred at approximately 1930 local time and resulted in severe damage to the small passenger vessel. One passenger was critically injured and three other passengers suffered serious injuries.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The investigation revealed that both vessels were underway with just one watch stander in their respective wheelhouses operating the vessels. The mega-yacht had previously posted a lookout, but thirty minutes prior to collision the lookout was sent to secure the BOSN locker and conduct safety rounds of the vessel and did not return to lookout duties prior to the collision. Similarly, the small passenger vessel was being operated by a single watch stander without an additional lookout posted. There were three operational radars between the two vessels, but both operators stated the radars never identified the other vessel prior to the collision.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard Investigators recommend the following measures be implemented by owners/operators of similar vessels in similar service to mitigate the risks associated with the identified contributing factors:

- Deckhands should perform lookout duties on a rotational watch schedule while the vessel is operating at night, in or around areas of limited visibility and at any other time deemed appropriate by the master and consistent with Rule 5 of the COLREGs.
- Small passenger vessels that carry overnight passengers are required by regulation to have a suitable number of watchmen on duty to guard against fire and other dangerous situations. A watchman can assist with lookout duties when they are not conducting their safety rounds.
- The operator with direct control of the vessel should not be the sole person in the wheelhouse while the vessel is operating at night, in and around areas of limited visibility and at any other time deemed appropriate by the master and consistent with Rule 5 of the COLREGs.

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 San Diego Investigations Division by phone at (619) 278-7256 or by email at sdio@uscg.mil.