



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Office of Investigations and Casualty Analysis

June 26, 2023
Washington, DC

Findings of Concern 015-23

**SEACOR POWER CASUALTY: DISPATCHER TRAINING,
DRAFT READINGS, AND WEATHER FORECASTING FOR
ALL COMMERCIAL 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 appropriate voluntary action, or so they can highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. In April 2021, a commercial liftboat carrying 19 individuals departed Port Fourchon and headed offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately seven nautical miles offshore, the vessel encountered unpredicted weather conditions that exceeded the vessel's operating limits. The winds were over 80 knots, and gusted up to 99 knots, which capsized the vessel and caused the tragic loss of 13 lives.



Contributing Factors and Analysis. While the investigation revealed that the biggest factor leading to the capsizing was the unpredicted weather conditions, there were also a number of additional factors that either contributed to the casualty or were identified as unsafe conditions. These issues should be addressed to prevent future incidents, and include the following:

- When the Coast Guard called the operating company regarding an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) alert for the liftboat, the Dispatcher was not aware of the vessel's operational status, and the Dispatcher failed to properly verify if the vessel was in distress. The Dispatcher's actions delayed the response to the EPIRB alert.
- There was a four foot difference between the reference lines for the draft marks on the liftboat's bow and stern. As a result, the crew had to subtract four feet from the stern draft readings in order to properly calculate the vessel's trim, but this procedure was not documented in any of the vessel's instructions or manuals. This difference in the draft mark reference lines caused confusion for several crew members assigned to key positions on the



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vessel, which indicated that they were not familiar with the vessel's trim calculations. There was no evidence that this unsafe condition contributed to the capsizing on this particular vessel, but it is very important to ensure that multiple crew members on each vessel are well trained on measuring draft readings and calculating list and trim.

- Due to an internet outage on the day of the incident, the Coast Guard did not send any Navigational Telex (NAVTEX) broadcasts from the site closest to the vessel for more than four hours. The investigation revealed that even if the NAVTEX broadcasts went out that day, the vessel's crew likely would not have used them, however this unsafe condition demonstrates the need for vessels to have multiple methods of obtaining weather forecasts.
- In addition to NAVTEX, the vessel's crew could also obtain weather forecasts by using a program on the ship's computer, but this computer was not located on the bridge. As a result, the individual operating the vessel could not use this program to obtain updated weather forecasts while underway. In this case, the weather that capsized the vessel was unpredicted, so additional weather checks likely would not have made a difference. However, frequent weather checks are vital to ensuring a crew is aware of unexpected changes to the weather conditions, and the methods of obtaining weather reports must be available at the vessel's operating station.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified a number of measures that may mitigate the risks posed by the issues discussed above. All commercial vessel owners and operators should consider the following voluntary actions:

- Training dispatchers and other on-call individuals to prepare them for emergency situations, and creating related Safety Management System procedures, quick response cards, or checklists for these types of situations.
- Providing clear procedures for calculating a vessel's draft readings, especially if the vessel is listing or if the vessel's draft marks are not aligned with the baseline.
- Ensuring that each vessel is equipped with at least two independent methods of obtaining weather forecasts, and that those methods are readily available on the bridge or at the operating station.

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 the Office of Investigations and Casualty Analysis by email at HQS-SMB-CG-INV@uscg.mil