

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 25, 1979

Forwarded to:

Admiral John B. Hayes
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
Washington, D.C. 20590

} SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

} M-79-67 through -69

About 0400 e.d.t. on May 9, 1978, the clam dredge PATTI-B capsized and sank in the Atlantic Ocean about 1,500 yards east of Ocean City, Maryland. Two crewmen were killed; one crewman was rescued by a Coast Guard 44-foot motor lifeboat which was standing by, and one crewman was rescued by another fishing boat which had been called to the scene after the capsizing. The PATTI-B has been salvaged and will be put back into service. 1/

About 0130 e.d.t. on May 9, 1978, the PATTI-B grounded as it was entering Ocean City Inlet. As a result of the grounding, the boat's propeller would not turn and the captain radioed the Coast Guard for help. A Coast Guard lifeboat towed the PATTI-B out of the surf and requested the boat to anchor until there was sufficient water to tow the PATTI-B into Ocean City Inlet.

After the PATTI-B anchored, the Coast Guard did not ascertain what survival equipment was aboard the clam dredge, nor did the Coast Guard advise the crew to put on their survival suits or lifejackets. None of the crew of the PATTI-B put on their survival suits; and, in fact, the captain and two crewmen removed their lifejackets after anchoring. At least one of the crewmen was asleep when the PATTI-B capsized. If the crewmen had been prepared for evacuation, all of them might have been saved. The Coast Guard should establish procedures to insure that persons aboard disabled vessels are wearing approved personal flotation devices.

The captain of the PATTI-B anchored by the stern using the boat's dredge. This permitted waves to wash over the boat's stern and water to accumulate on deck. Any accumulation of water reduced the boat's intact stability. When anchored or underway in stern or quartering seas, a fishing boat may lose stability by being momentarily poised on a wave. Both factors contributed to the capsizing of the PATTI-B. The Coast Guard should publish, in a form understandable to commercial fishermen, information concerning dangers of anchoring by the stern, the adverse effects of water on deck, and the effective loss of stability due to a boat's being momentarily poised on a wave.

1/ For more detailed information read "Marine Accident Report--Grounding and Capsizing of Clam Dredge PATTI-B at Ocean City Inlet, Ocean City, Maryland, May 9, 1978" (NTSB-MAR-79-9).

Although not required to meet any stability standards, the PATTI-B as loaded on May 9, 1978, met the intact stability requirements of U.S. Coast Guard Weather Criteria, the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization's Criteria for Fishing Vessels, and the stability criteria of the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977. However, the PATTI-B still capsized. There may be a need to modify the above criteria in view of this accident.


Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard:

Establish procedures to insure that persons aboard disabled vessels are wearing approved personal flotation devices during rescue operations. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-67)

Publish information aimed at commercial fishermen concerning the adverse effects of anchoring by the stern, the adverse effects of water on deck, and the effective loss of stability due to a boat's being momentarily poised on a wave. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-68)

Conduct a design study to determine if current published intact stability criteria are adequate for vessels similar in design to the PATTI-B. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-69)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and GOLDMAN, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: James B. King
Chairman