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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: February 12, 1979

Forwarded to:

Mr. Richard Frank
Administrator
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
Rockville, Maryland 20852

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-79-8

About 1625 e.d.t. on June 6, 1977, the charter fishing boat DIXIE LEE II capsized during a sudden, severe thunderstorm in the Chesapeake Bay near Norfolk, Virginia, with 27 persons on board. Shortly after the accident, a commercial fishing boat passed near the accident scene and rescued 14 persons. Twelve persons died and another is missing and presumed dead. THE DIXIE LEE II suffered minor damage due to flooding, and after being repaired and recertified by the U.S. Coast Guard, was returned to service. 1/

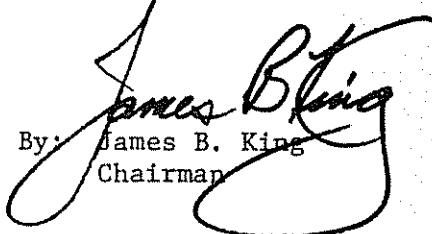
The Safety Board determined that the DIXIE LEE II was capsized by the overturning effect of winds exceeding 50 kns. In its continuous marine weather broadcasts, the National Weather Service (NWS) advised that a severe thunderstorm was approaching the vicinity of the accident and that the storm, which was moving nearly 50 mph, would give little advance warning. Although broadcasts warning of the severe thunderstorm were sufficiently accurate and timely, the Safety Board believes that the use of the term "severe thunderstorm" without a statement of wind speeds may not be widely understood to mean that wind gusts can be expected to exceed 50 kns.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:

Provide sufficient information in its severe weather statements to indicate the severe weather condition, such as wind speed, for which the statement is valid. (Class II, Priority Action)
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1/ For more detailed information read "Marine Accident Report-- Charter Fishing Boat DIXIE LEE II Capsizing in Severe Thunderstorm in the Chesapeake Bay near Norfolk, Virginia, June 6, 1977" (NTSB-MAR-79-1).

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members concurred in the above recommendations.


By: James B. King
Chairman