



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

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Date: October 19, 1988

In reply refer to: M-88-58 through -60

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About 2100 on November 5, 1987, the 115-foot-long U.S. fishing vessel UYAK II capsized and sank in the Gulf of Alaska, near Kodiak Island, about 60 nautical miles south of Kodiak, Alaska. The vessel's captain and one deckhand were rescued from one of the UYAK II's two liferafts by another fishing vessel. Despite an extensive search by U.S. Coast Guard aircraft and commercial fishing vessels, the UYAK II's chief engineer and three other deckhands were not found and are presumed dead.¹

Since the three deckhands were not sighted or heard from by the relief captain and the assistant engineer after the UYAK II capsized and since no bodies were recovered after the accident, the Safety Board is unable to determine what happened to the three deckhands. However, the Safety Board believes that had the relief captain when he first sensed that the UYAK II was in danger of sinking, or the assistant engineer after he retrieved his exposure suit, alerted the three deckhands to the vessel's danger and directed them to don their exposure suits, the three deckhands might have survived this accident. If the UYAK II had been equipped with a general alarm, the relief captain probably could have sounded an alarm to abandon the vessel while broadcasting the distress message without leaving his position. Although the North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners' Association's (NPFVOA) *Vessel Safety Manual* addresses emergency signals, the publication does not address the need for a general alarm on fishing vessels. The Safety Board believes that the NPFVOA should amend the *Vessel Safety Manual* to include a recommendation for a general alarm on fishing vessels.

The chief engineer was last seen running toward the pumps in the engine room in response to the assistant engineer's request that the after fish tanks be dewatered. Although the chief engineer was not seen or heard from again and his body was not recovered, it is likely that the chief engineer was trapped in the engine room while he

¹For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--*Capsizing and Sinking of the U.S. Fishing Vessel UYAK II in the Gulf of Alaska near Kodiak Island, Alaska, November 6, 1987* (NTSB/MAR-88/08).

attempted to line up the valves to dewater the after fish tanks. Even though the assistant engineer had warned the chief engineer to get out of the engineroom after pumping out the fish tanks, the UYAK II probably capsized too quickly for the chief engineer to escape from the engineroom, go to his quarters, and retrieve and don his exposure suit. Like the three deckhands, without his exposure suit he would have been expected to survive only 1 to 3 hours in the 43° F water. It is possible that the chief engineer might have been saved if the UYAK II had been equipped with a general alarm which rang in the engineroom or some means of communication between the wheelhouse and the engineroom. While the relief captain was broadcasting the distress message, he had no way to warn the chief engineer of the dangerous condition except to send the assistant engineer back into the engineroom while the vessel was capsizing. The Safety Board believes that some communication system between the wheelhouse and the engineroom and crew accommodations of fishing vessels is a necessary safety feature. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that the NPFVOA should amend the *Vessel Safety Manual* to include a recommendation for a communications system between a fishing vessel's wheelhouse and engineroom and crew accommodations.

In addition to the Coast Guard required lifejackets, the UYAK II was equipped with two liferafts, seven exposure suits, and two emergency position indicating radiobeacons (EPIRB). However, because the crew's exposure suits and lifejackets were stowed in the crew's quarters, the crewmembers on deck had to enter the deckhouse to retrieve their exposure suits and lifejackets when the UYAK II capsized. It is possible that they died trying to retrieve their exposure suits. If the exposure suits had been stowed near the watertight door leading from the crew accommodations to the after main deck, the suits would have been available whether the crew were in their quarters, working on deck, or in the engineroom. Consequently, even though the UYAK II was adequately equipped with lifejackets and exposure suits, their stowage location made them inaccessible in an emergency. U.S. Coast Guard Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 5-86, *Voluntary Standards for U.S. Uninspected and Commercial Fishing Vessels*, states that exposure suits should be stored in a very accessible, dry place, such as the wheelhouse. The Coast Guard recommendation could be interpreted as meaning the crewmembers' quarters. The NPFVOA *Vessel Safety Manual* simply states that all lifesaving equipment including exposure suits should be "stowed in a manner that makes it usable if an emergency strikes without warning."

The Safety Board first addressed the need for the stowage of life preservers close to the exterior of uninspected vessels in its report on the capsizing and sinking of the U.S. sailing vessel PRIDE OF BALTIMORE on May 14, 1986.² On February 18, 1987, the Safety Board recommended that the Coast Guard:

M-87-4

Require stowage of life preservers close to or at emergency stations, if designated, or close to the exterior of each uninspected vessel to facilitate immediate access in the event of a sudden, catastrophic event.

²For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--*Capsizing and Sinking of the U.S. Sailing Vessel PRIDE OF BALTIMORE in the Atlantic Ocean, May 14, 1986* (NTSB/MAR-87/01).

On May 29, 1987, the Coast Guard replied:

The Coast Guard does not concur with this recommendation. Stowage of life preservers on deck is not recommended as a universal requirement. On smaller vessels, such stowage could lead to the loss of the life preservers overboard if a large wave washes over the deck. The regulations (46 CFR 25.25-9(a)) already require that the life preservers be readily accessible. A more specific regulation would be difficult to develop since uninspected vessels are of many different types. The Coast Guard recommends wearing appropriate personal flotation devices (PFD) when working on deck, especially in bad weather or at night. There are a variety of PFDs available specifically intended for use while working that provide flotation, yet allow the freedom of movement necessary to complete most tasks.

Information on life preserver stowage requirements and the different types of PFDs available was disseminated under Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 5-86 on "Voluntary Standards for U.S. Uninspected Commercial Fishing Vessels." Although intended primarily for fishing vessels, this NVIC includes recommendations that are applicable to many types of uninspected vessels. Similar information would be included in any future Coast Guard recommendations or voluntary standards for other uninspected vessels.

On August 3, 1987, the Safety Board stated:

The Safety Board is disappointed that the Coast Guard does not agree on the need for implementing the requirements of this safety recommendation. This accident is a good example of what can happen when there is not enough time to retrieve life preservers that are stowed in a location which the Coast Guard apparently considers to be "readily accessible"; in this case, below deck in the crew's quarters. The stowage of life preservers in more accessible locations aboard other types of vessels, e.g., passenger vessels, has been the subject of previously issued safety recommendations. The Coast Guard has consistently opposed the Board on this issue; therefore, Safety Recommendation M-87-4 has been classified as "Closed--Unacceptable Action." However, we strongly urge the Coast Guard to reconsider its position on this issue.

The Safety Board continues to believe that life preservers and exposure suits should be stowed outside crew quarters and closer to or at emergency stations, if designated, or close to the exterior of each vessel near normal working areas on uninspected vessels. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that the Coast Guard should amend its safety regulations for uninspected vessels to require that life preservers and exposure suits not be located in crew quarters but at exits near normal work areas. In the interim, the NPFVOA should amend the *Vessel Safety Manual* to recommend that life preservers and exposure suits be located at exits near normal work areas.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners' Association:

Amend the *Vessel Safety Manual* to recommend that general alarm systems be installed on commercial fishing vessels. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-58)

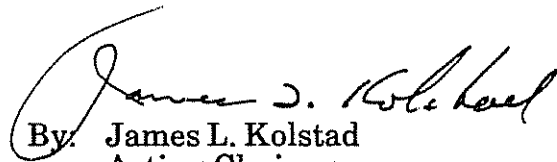
Amend the *Vessel Safety Manual* to recommend that a communications system be installed between the wheelhouse and the engineroom and crew accommodations on commercial fishing vessels. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-59)

Revise the *Vessel Safety Manual* to recommend that life preservers and exposure suits not be stowed in crew quarters but closer to or at emergency stations, if designated, or close to the exterior of each vessel near normal working areas. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-60)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-88-52 through -57 to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "... to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations M-88-58 through -60 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, BURNETT, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in these recommendations. LAUBER, Member, did not participate.


By: James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman