



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Log M-348

Date: December 15, 1988

In reply refer to: M-88-63

Mr. William B. Bolivar
Vice President-General Manager
Golden Nugget Laughlin
P.O. Box 2281
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At 2140 on July 15, 1988, two small passenger vessels, the 28-foot RS 14 and the 29-foot NC 137, were traveling on the Colorado River in good visibility when they collided near Bullhead City, Arizona. Four passengers were injured. The RS 14 was headed downriver en route from the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino in Laughlin, Nevada, to Bullhead City. The NC 137 was headed across the approximately 500-foot-wide Colorado River en route from the Nevada Club Casino and Hotel in Laughlin to Bullhead City. The RS 14, owned and operated by the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino, had 1 operator and 16 passengers on board. The NC 137, owned and operated by the Nevada Club Casino and Hotel, had 1 operator and 11 passengers on board.

The operator of the RS 14 stated that he was looking toward the RS 14 pier on the Arizona side of the river and did not see the NC 137 until immediately before his port bow collided with the port side of the NC 137. He said that when he saw the NC 137, he put his throttle full astern. He said that the speed of the RS 14 at the time of the collision was 12 to 15 mph. Several passengers on the RS 14 stated that the operator was engaged in a conversation with passengers just before the collision and that he was not looking toward the approaching traffic.

The operator of the NC 137 stated that as his vessel departed the Nevada Club Casino and Hotel pier, he saw a downbound vessel about a city block upriver from his vessel and that he had plenty of time to cross ahead of the downbound vessel. He stated that he did not realize the vessels were about to collide until a passenger screamed that a vessel was approaching. The operator of the NC 137 estimated that his speed at the time of the collision was about 10 mph.

The RS 14 was towed and the NC 137 proceeded under its own power to their respective berths at Bullhead City where two of the four injured passengers were transported to the Bullhead City Hospital and admitted for observation. Damage to both vessels was minor.

The Nevada Club Casino and Hotel employed four regular vessel operators to run its small passenger vessels. All four operators had valid U.S. Coast Guard licenses required to operate the vessels. The operator of the NC 137 at the time of the collision was not one of the regular operators, and he was not licensed to operate the vessel. He was operating the vessel because the regular operator was on vacation. He had been operating the vessel regularly on a part-time basis which included providing relief breaks for the regular operators. The National Transportation Safety Board is concerned that the Nevada Club Casino and Hotel allowed one of its vessels to be operated by a nonlicensed operator.

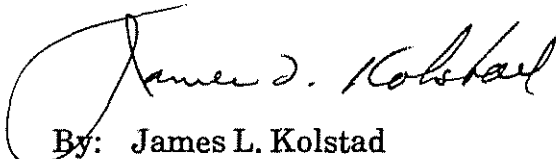
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Golden Nugget Laughlin (formerly the Nevada Club Casino and Hotel):

Monitor the license status of vessel operators, and prohibit operation of its certificated vessels by anyone not licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard.
(Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-63)

Also, as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-88-64 and -65 to the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino.

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 recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation M-88-63 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman