

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RESULTS OF MISHAP ANALYSIS OF THE DEATHS OF TWO COAST GUARD CUTTER HEALY CREWMEMBERS

Overview:

- The Coast Guard has released the Chief of Staff's Final Decision Letter (FDL) on the Analysis of a Class "A" Mishap; USCGC HEALY (WAGB-20) in its entirety. It is posted at http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/foia/Electronic_Reading_Room.htm.
- The release of the Chief of Staff's Final Decision Letter signals the completion of a rigorous safety investigation, analysis and review of the circumstances which lead up to and contributed to the deaths of LT Jessica Hill and Petty Officer Steven Duque on 17 August 2006 during a cold water familiarization dive from the Coast Guard Cutter HEALY during a scientific support mission in the Arctic Ocean.
- In January 2007 the Coast Guard released the results of the Administrative Investigation. At that time the Commandant indicated that the Coast Guard would be continuing its review of the mishap through the mishap analysis/safety investigation process. This process has been completed.
- The sole purpose of the mishap analysis/safety investigative process is to find out why the mishap occurred so similar mishaps could be prevented in the future. This process traces the sequence of events from before the mishap through the time of the mishap evolution, analyzing these events for all causal and contributing factors that played a role in the mishap, and providing recommendations to ensure a similar mishap does not happen again in the future. In contrast, the purpose of the administrative investigation is to provide the convening and reviewing authorities with adequate information upon which to base decisions in the matters involved, such as deciding whether adverse administrative and/or disciplinary action was necessary.
- During the course of the mishap/safety investigative process numerous diving, medical and technical experts were consulted. These external subject matter experts provided immeasurable assistance and additional insights for further internal policy/procedural revisions that will improve requirements, management, and policy guidance of the diving program at the Service, unit and individual levels.
- Our sympathies continue to go out to the families, friends and shipmates of Lieutenant Jessica Hill and Petty Officer Steven Duque.

Key Results:

- The Chief of Staff's Final Decision Letter on the Analysis of a Class "A" Mishap on USCGC HEALY validated the facts as put forth in the Administrative Investigation; identified all causal and contributing factors to the mishap, and provided a detailed list of directed changes to Coast Guard programs, many of which are underway and some of which have already been completed.
- There were no additional significant facts, however, the analysis of the causal and contributing factors and the directed corrective actions are more extensive and more detailed.

Completed Actions:

- All dive operations onboard HEALY have been suspended and remain suspended.
- The Pacific Area Commander completed a special Ready for Operations assessment of CGC HEALY's unit wide training program in March 2007.
- In accordance with ALCOAST 440/06, a one-day safety stand down was ordered and completed for all diving units. In addition, a modified diving program safety survey (no training, inspection only) was completed on every diving unit on or before 12 January 2007.

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- To improve supervision and oversight the Assistant Commandant for Operations has upgraded the Dive Program Manager billet from an O-3 to an O-4, and established a Chief Petty Officer billet as the Assistant Coast Guard Diving Program Manager. Area Commanders, District Commanders, and the Deployable Operations Group Commander have also designated diving program oversight billets within their commands responsible for tracking the readiness, qualification and training status of their diving units.
- Prior to and during Operation Deep Freeze 2007, USCGC POLAR SEA completed a dive risk assessment, completed prescribed dry suit training, and added a temporary duty USCG diving advisor to serve as dive team safety observer during Antarctic training and dive operations.
- The Assistant Commandant for Operations reaffirmed and emphasized that diving unit commanders are to provide the opportunity for and require regularly scheduled training dives to allow divers to maintain proficiency as required by reference (c).
- The Assistant Commandant for Operations chartered a cross-directorate study team to evaluate requirements, management and policy guidance of the Coast Guard's diving program. The results of this study team are under review by senior Coast Guard leadership for future improvements to the Dive Program.
- The Assistant Commandant for Operations sent a dive program representative to the Diving in the Arctic Environment course from 15 – 22 March 2007 (sponsored by the Smithsonian Scientific Diving Program) to glean the latest information on diving in the Arctic region.
- The Assistant Commandants for Operations and Human Resources have developed a dive training module for inclusion in appropriate training syllabi for command cadre of dive units and other field units who may utilize divers. Specifically, a block of instruction has been added to the Prospective Commanding Officer and Executive Officer (PCO/PXO) Afloat Course, the Prospective Operations Officer (POPS) Afloat Course, and the Boat Forces Command Cadre Course at the Leadership Development Center located at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.
- The Assistant Commandant for Operations has updated the Dive Program Safety Survey checklists to reflect changes in CG/Navy policies as of 23 April 2007.

Highlights of Directed Actions:

- Numerous revisions have been directed to be made to the Coast Guard Diving Policies and Procedures Manual, COMDTINST M3150.1(series). Numerous additional items have been directed to be reviewed for inclusion.
- Numerous actions have been directed with respect to formal and on-the-job training for divers, support and medical personnel. Actions were directed with respect to diving equipment, assignments, billeting and program management for divers.
- CGC HEALY specific corrective actions have been directed as well as overall Polar Icebreaker Program corrective actions.
- Process improvements were directed for investigative processes, and a formal organizational risk assessment was directed for all Coast Guard operational mission areas from the perspective of oversight and policy.