

SP-20
Log M-289

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: September 10, 1985

Forwarded to:

Captain J. W. Kinnier
Commanding Officer
U.S. Naval Weapons Station
Seal Beach, California 90740-5000

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-85-66

About 2100 ^{1/} on October 27, 1984, the operator of the recreational motorboat WHISKEY RUNNER met some friends in Huntington Harbor, California, and launched the boat, which had been borrowed from Sundown Marine Company of Huntington Beach, California. The operator stated that after launching the WHISKEY RUNNER, they proceeded onboard the boat to a restaurant in Huntington Harbor and docked the boat at the restaurant about midnight. The operator said that he stayed at the restaurant until about 0145 on October 28. Outside the restaurant, the operator met some other friends and invited them and their companions to join him on a cruise to the QUEEN MARY, a floating hotel in Long Beach, California. The operator and eight passengers, all of whom were in their twenties, boarded the WHISKEY RUNNER. None of the persons who had accompanied the operator to the restaurant earlier were onboard. Two of the passengers said that they all had been drinking alcohol. ^{2/}

The WHISKEY RUNNER proceeded out Huntington Harbor, past the U.S. Naval Weapons Station, and through the waters of Anaheim Bay to the open waters of San Pedro Bay. The operator said that it was a calm, clear night, with no moon, but that he saw the North Star. The WHISKEY RUNNER did not stop at the QUEEN MARY, and passengers said that they were not drinking alcohol while they were onboard the boat. He said that there was about a 1-foot chop. The operator said that, during the voyage back from the QUEEN MARY, the eight passengers were all awake and sitting in the passenger area of the boat. He said that he was using the shore lights as reference markers for navigation and that the boat was making about 30 mph (26 knots) as it turned into the entrance to Anaheim Bay. He said that, as he made the turn into Anaheim Bay close to the west jetty, the shore lights were obscured by the west jetty rocks and he did not see a 12-foot-diameter concrete mooring buoy in the U.S. Navy anchorage until the boat was 5 to 10 feet from it. About 0250, the WHISKEY RUNNER struck buoy 0-8 nearly head-on, demolishing the port bow. The WHISKEY RUNNER sank moments later.

^{1/} All times up to 0200 on October 28 are Pacific daylight time (P.d.t.) based on the 24-hour clock. All times after 0200 on October 28 are Pacific standard time (P.s.t.) based on the 24-hour clock.

^{2/} For more detailed information, read Marine Summary Report--"U.S. Recreational Motorboat WHISKEY RUNNER, Anaheim Bay, California, October 28, 1984" (NTSB/MAR-85/01SUM).

Three passengers who had been sitting directly behind the operator (all facing aft) were thrown clear of the boat and survived. The operator was able to stay afloat as the boat sank. The other five passengers, who were sitting on the other side of the boat, did not escape from the boat and died. One survivor, who suffered a broken pelvis, swam to shore, climbed onto the west jetty, and attracted the attention of some persons fishing on the jetty. Meanwhile, another survivor put a survivor on top of the buoy and clung to the operator, who was seriously injured, and awaited rescue.

The waters of Anaheim Bay constitute a danger zone (33 CFR 204.195). The recreational boater has a number of sources of information available that state the restrictions on boating in Anaheim Bay and its entrance. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) chart 18749 shows that the channel through Anaheim Bay is a restricted area regulated by 33 CFR 204.195 and that the area on the east side of the channel is an explosives anchorage governed by 33 CFR 110.215. The NOAA chart clearly shows the location of each mooring buoy located in the anchorage areas on either side of the channel.

Title 33 CFR 204.195 states that the waters between the east and west jetties and the contiguous basin and tidal channel are a danger zone and that no craft is authorized to transit the area without registering with and obtaining a decal from the weapons station. However, in fact, the decals are no longer issued or required. The U.S. Navy regularly patrols Anaheim Bay to keep vessels out of the anchorage. Speed limits in the channel are specified by 33 CFR 204.195, which states that vessels shall not exceed 8 knots (9.2 mph) in the outer harbor and 3 knots (3.5 mph) in the inner harbor. A 5-mph (4.3 knots) speed limit in both the inner and outer harbors actually is enforced. The U.S. Coast Pilot states that all the waters inside the jetties of Anaheim Bay are within a danger zone and that an explosives anchorage has been established.

The Orange County Harbor Patrol has posted a large sign at the launching ramp in Huntington Harbor indicating a maximum speed of 5 mph (4.3 knots) through the channel (restricted area) and regularly patrols Anaheim Bay for violations of the speed limits or other regulations. There also is a smaller unlighted sign in the inner harbor showing the speed and other restrictions. However, there are no signs posted on the jetties to alert occasional visitors entering Anaheim Bay to the speed and other restrictions.

The U.S. Navy mooring buoy which the WHISKEY RUNNER struck was about 12 feet in diameter and rose about 5 feet out of the water. It was not lighted. The mooring buoy and others like it in Anaheim Bay are not lighted because the large chains used to moor ammunition vessels would destroy any lights as the vessels swung around the buoy. Furthermore, the buoys are in waters not open to public navigation. The channel is well-marked by various aids to navigation, both lighted and unlighted. There was a green lighted buoy and a fixed red light marking the ends of the jetties, two unlighted buoys about halfway to the inner harbor, and a fixed red light and an unlighted buoy at the entrance to the inner harbor. The channel also is provided with a lighted range to navigate down the center of the channel.

Although Federal regulations are explicit in stating that Anaheim Bay is a danger zone, and nautical charts clearly show it is a restricted area, there is a need for a lighted sign on the end of one or both jetties to warn infrequent visitors of the speed limit and that they should proceed with caution. The Orange County Harbor Patrol and U.S. Navy,

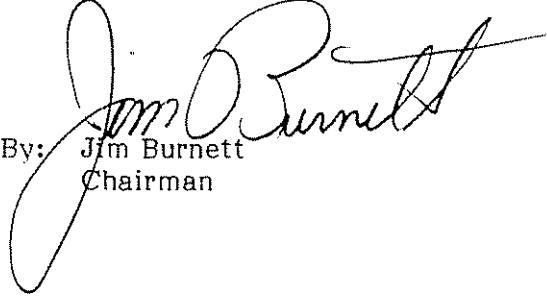
through education and enforcement, provide adequate warnings to local users of the restricted nature of the waterway. However, the infrequent visitor entering the channel from San Pedro Bay might not become aware of the restrictions unless a Harbor Patrol or U.S. Navy patrol vessel was present at the time.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Naval Weapons Station:

Erect a lighted sign on at least one jetty at the entrance to Anaheim Bay indicating the existence of a danger zone and the maximum speed limit. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-85-66)

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 actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY, Member, concurred in this recommendation.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman