

SP-20
M-294

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: 1 OCT 1985

Forwarded to:

Mr. Howard Saffer
Secretary
National Association of Marine Surveyors
86 Windsor Gate Drive
North Hills, New York 11040

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-85-93

About 2230 e.s.t. on March 2, 1982, the fishing vessel JUDITH LEE ROSE caught fire in the Atlantic Ocean about 75 miles east of Gloucester, Massachusetts. The six crewmembers later abandoned the ship and were rescued. The JUDITH LEE ROSE is presumed to have sunk. 1/

Earlier, about 2200, the master and one crewmember had been sleeping in the forecandle, and another crewmember was in the forecandle preparing to relieve the helm watch. The engineer and the helmsman were in the wheelhouse, and one crewmember was in the galley, located below the wheelhouse. About 2230, while proceeding aft to the wheelhouse, the oncoming helmsman saw smoke and fire in the engine room. He notified the engineer and then returned to the forecandle where he awoke the master and the one crewmember. Shortly afterward, the master and both crewmembers proceeded aft to help the engineer extinguish the fire. Along the way, the master stopped at the galley where a crewmember gave him a fire extinguisher.

When the aft engine room hatch was opened, the flames rose 5 to 10 feet high. The engineer discharged the fire extinguisher in the open space, but ordered the hatch closed when he found that his efforts were futile. He said that he was afraid that two empty 2,000-gallon fuel tanks near the fire would explode. Consequently, the engineer recommended to the master that they abandon the vessel. After ordering the crewmembers to prepare the liferaft for launching, the master proceeded to the bridge where he requested assistance over the VHF-FM radio from the fishing vessel MOTHER ANN, which was about 5 miles away. About 15 minutes later, the engine stopped and the pilothouse filled with smoke. The master and crew then proceeded to the forward part of the vessel.

About 2330, the crew of the JUDITH LEE ROSE abandoned the ship in a liferaft. About midnight, all six survivors were rescued by the MOTHER ANN which then departed the area en route to Gloucester. The crew onboard the MOTHER ANN last saw the JUDITH LEE ROSE with its wheelhouse and stern fully engulfed in flame. A search of the area by the Coast Guard on the following day failed to locate the vessel, and it is presumed to have sunk.

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Summary Report--"Fishing Vessel JUDITH LEE ROSE, Atlantic Ocean, March 2, 1982" (NTSB/MAR-85/02/SUM).

Although the Safety Board could not determine the source of the fire, the lack of fire detectors allowed the fire to burn out of control before it was discovered. This is the tenth accident which the Safety Board has investigated in which the lack of fire detectors was a factor which contributed to the loss of an uninspected vessel. Because the earliest possible detection allows the best response to a fire, the Safety Board believes that if a fire detector had been installed in the unmanned engine room of the JUDITH LEE ROSE, the vessel might have been saved. There are several reliable fire detectors available which require little maintenance and can be either battery powered or use the vessel's electrical system. Their cost ranges from \$10 to \$250.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Association of Marine Surveyors:

Publicize in its National News Letter the benefits of installing fire detectors in unmanned engine rooms of uninspected commercial fishing vessels. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-85-93)

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