

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

AI 4

M-182

ISSUED: December 29, 1981

Forwarded to:

Admiral John B. Hayes
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
Washington, D.C. 20593

Mr. William J. Delaney
President
National Association of State
Boating Law Administrators
c/o Bureau of Marine Recreation Vehicles
Agency Building No. 1
Empire State Plaza
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-81-90

On November 25, 1980, a 22-foot U.S. sailboat, the MR. B, grounded near Punta Chivata, Mexico, in the Golfo de California. The MR. B was one of five boats participating in a juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program sponsored by Vision Quest National, Limited of Tucson, Arizona. Three of the nine persons aboard the boat died; the other six are missing and presumed dead. The estimated loss of the boat was \$7,000. ^{1/}

Vision Quest National, Limited is a profit-making child caring institution, established in 1973 and licensed by the State of Arizona. It conducts a juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program which takes a novel approach to juvenile rehabilitation. Through wilderness survival courses, it instills self-respect in the participants by demanding constant achievement. The participants are turned over to Vision Quest by juvenile courts and detention centers in many States where the teenagers have been held for serious offenses. Most of the cost of the program is paid by State agencies, although the cost for some participants is paid through other sources. Participation in the program by all of the teenagers is voluntary.

Vision Quest officially set up its Ocean Quest wilderness program in June 1980, although Vision Quest had begun sailing programs aboard the BRILLIG in October 1979 when the BRILLIG was still a privately owned and operated yacht. The State of Arizona objected to the Ocean Quest program and did not license the program nor send any teenagers to the program. Arizona teenagers participating in the Ocean Quest program were placed through other sources. Youngsters from Pennsylvania and Colorado participated in the program under an interstate licensing agreement.

^{1/} For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Grounding of U.S. Sailboat MR. B, near Punta Chivata, Mexico, November 25, 1980" (NTSB-MAR-81-13).

The success of Vision Quest and other similar juvenile delinquent rehabilitation programs is to be commended. However, the Safety Board believes that Vision Quest and other child caring facilities, considering initiating similar boating programs, should meet existing safety standards. The MR. B, the SUNDANCE, the LAZARUS, and the BRILLIG were U.S. vessels carrying more than six passengers for hire. Whether these boats were subject to U.S. Coast Guard regulations while operating in the Golfo de California has not been finally determined. Nevertheless, the Safety Board believes that child caring facilities, such as Vision Quest, should comply with Coast Guard safety regulations at least as stringent as the small passenger vessel regulations, 46 CFR Subchapter T, when their boats carry more than six youths; and the States which license them or send children to the facilities having boating programs should require the facilities to meet Coast Guard safety standards. The Safety Board recognizes that the purpose of Ocean Quest and other similar programs is to present a challenge to the program's participants. However, the safety requirements contained in the small passenger vessel regulations are minimum standards. The safety requirements in 46 CFR Subchapter T will not detract from the purpose of these programs, but will insure that the boats are properly constructed, and that the vessel operators, who instruct the teenagers, are qualified, and that proper lifesaving equipment is provided for emergencies.

The Safety Board also recognizes that State licensing agencies of child caring institutions do not always have the expertise to evaluate programs, such as Ocean Quest, but each State has a safe boating program and U.S. Coast Guard offices throughout the country can provide information on minimum safety standards. Before licensing or placing children in child caring institutions which have boating programs, State agencies should consult with their own safe boating program administrator or the Coast Guard concerning minimum safety standards. The Safety Board believes that the Coast Guard together with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators should initiate a program to provide minimum safety standards to State authorities responsible for licensing or placing children at those institutions with boating programs.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators:

Establish a program to inform State authorities responsible for either licensing or placing children at child care institutions with boating programs of existing minimum safety standards such boating programs should meet. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-81-90)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and GOLDMAN and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation. McADAMS, Member, did not participate.


By: James B. King
Chairman