

PROBABLE CAUSE

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the sinking of the COMET was major, undetected flooding due to the ingress of water through the deteriorated hull planking. The loss of life following the sinking was caused by the absence of a radio distress call, the absence of signal devices for use by persons in the water, and the lack of adequate equipment to protect the victims from prolonged exposure to cold water.

LOG M-45 NOT 1580A RECOMMENDATIONS M-75-12-18 JRU

The National Transportation Safety Board concurs in the Marine Board's recommendation requiring all primary lifesaving devices to keep persons out of the water when the prevailing water temperature is expected to be 60°F. or less. In this regard, the Safety Board does not believe that the Coast Guard's casualty records, which did not support the need for protecting persons in cold water, are sufficiently definitive.

The National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U. S. Coast Guard:

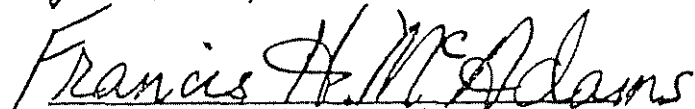
1. Determine the effectiveness of its public information program as a method of producing awareness by the public regarding the requirements for a Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection for boats carrying more than six passengers. (Recommendation M-75-12) Class II
2. Seek legislation to establish a safety program to provide uniform protection for persons regardless of whether they are being carried for pleasure or for hire aboard boats of larger capacity (e.g., greater than six persons and over 26 feet). Such legislation should include authorization for:
 - a. a boat document system, similar to the system used by owners of private aircraft, for recording of inspections and repairs over the service life of all boats of larger capacity. These records should be maintained by the owner and transferred with the boat at the time of sale;
 - b. an inspection for safety-related deficiencies at the time of transfer of ownership, and the requirement for correction of these deficiencies prior to operation under the new ownership. (Recommendation M-75-13) Class II
3. Seek legislation to require that boats of larger capacity have a means to alert the operator at his control station of unsafe water levels in each decked-over compartment, the flooding of which would result in the sinking of the vessel. (Recommendation M-75-14) Class II

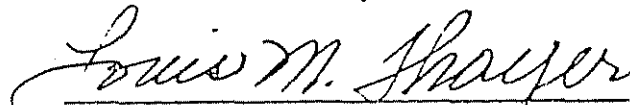
4. Seek legislation to require the carriage of sufficient lifeboats or liferafts for all persons on board with signaling devices contained therein for all larger capacity boats operating in water temperatures below 60°F. (Recommendation M-75-15) Class II
5. Determine and include in its future accident investigation reports whether immersion hypothermia contributed to loss of life, and encode such information in its computerized accident information systems. (Recommendation M-75-16) Class II
6. Sponsor the development of reliable cold-water survival equipment for use on boats operating in waters with temperatures below 60°F. (Recommendation M-75-17) Class III
7. Establish a program to advise the public of the problems and means of survival in cold water so that persons will know that they should provide themselves with commercially available personal thermal protective equipment. (Recommendation M-75-18) Class I


BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

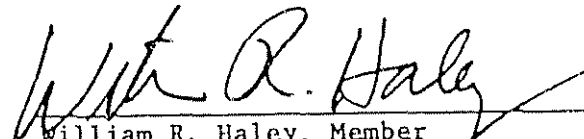
Adopted this 5th day of August, 1975:


John H. Reed, Chairman


Francis H. McAdams, Member


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Isabel A. Burgess, Member


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