

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Log M-56

ISSUED: October 26, 1977

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Forwarded to:

Richard E. Wiley  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-77-31

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About 2051 (p.d.t.), on September 13, 1976, the PEARL-C, a charter fishing boat, rolled over on its port side, flooded, and sank while being towed across the Columbia River Bar near Astoria, Oregon, by a U.S. Coast Guard 44-foot motor lifeboat. Of the 10 persons aboard the PEARL-C, 2 persons were rescued, 1 person drowned, and 7 persons, including the vessel operator, are missing and presumed dead. 1/

The PEARL-C became disabled and requested Coast Guard assistance about 1325 on September 13. The Coast Guard located the PEARL-C after a lengthy search and took it in tow. While the PEARL-C was being towed, its operator steered the boat from the flying bridge in order to keep the towline aligned with the towing vessel.

Since the radiotelephone on the PEARL-C was located near the operator station in the main cabin, the operator had to come down into the cabin to use the radio. While under tow, the operator did not communicate with the motor lifeboat while he was steering the boat from the flying bridge. If the operator had become aware of an emergency situation on the PEARL-C he would have had to move from the flying bridge to the radiotelephone to report the problem; such movement would have been dangerous since the PEARL-C was rolling heavily just before the accident. Therefore, the location of the radiotelephone installation resulted in an unsafe condition.

Although this arrangement obviously prevented the operator from maintaining an effective listening watch on channel 16 VHF, as required by FCC regulations, the installation was approved by the FCC inspector. In part, this is because FCC regulations do not specifically require the

1/ For more detailed information, read "Marine Casualty Report: Charter Fishing Boat PEARL-C Sinking on the Columbia River Bar Near Astoria, Oregon, September 13, 1976." (NTSB-MAR-77-1)

radiotelephone installation to service each operator station that might be used on a vessel.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Communications Commission:

Require the installation at each operator steering station on charter boats of a radiotelephone or an extension speaker and microphone with adequate control of the transceiver to insure reliable communications. (Class II, Priority Followup)  
(M-77-31)

BAILEY, Acting Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.



By: Kay Bailey  
Acting Chairman