

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 30, 1978

Forwarded to:

Honorable Robert F. Bennett
Governor of Kansas
State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-78-62

Mr. William E. Hurtig
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About 1915 c.d.t. on June 17, 1978, the steam showboat WHIPPOORWILL was overturned by a tornado while in transit on Lake Pomona, Kansas. Of the 60 persons on board the vessel, 15 were killed and 5 were injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board conducted an on-scene investigation to determine the cause or probable cause of the WHIPPOORWILL's capsizing. The Safety Board's investigator worked closely with the Osage County Sheriff's Department to obtain physical evidence and statements from eyewitnesses. The on-scene phase of the accident investigation was completed on June 21, 1978, and the resultant evidence is being analyzed.

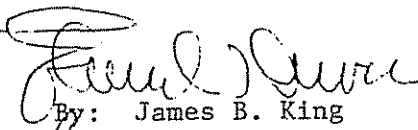
Because of the unique configuration of the WHIPPOORWILL and the unusual meteorological conditions involved, the Safety Board will not complete its investigation for several months. However, preliminary analysis indicates that the WHIPPOORWILL's intact stability was significantly reduced, because water was carried within its integral hull tanks and voids. Because of this reduced stability, the vessel could capsize if it is subjected to relatively low wind velocities.

As a result of the accident, the WHIPPOORWILL sustained only minor damage and is once again engaged in passenger service. It is highly likely that water will accumulate in its tanks and voids again, because of the design of the bilge drainage system and because the hull will probably leak from the vessel salvage operations.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the owner and operator:

Inspect the WHIPPOORWILL internally to insure that the hull does not leak. Keep the vessel's integral hull tanks and voids empty and dry while the vessel is underway. (Class I, Urgent Action) (M-78-62)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: James B. King
for Chairman