



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

*Log M-344A*

Date: July 27, 1988

In reply refer to : M-88-45 and -46

Mr. Richard Sise  
Operations Manager  
Cross Sound Ferry Services, Inc.  
2 Ferry Street  
P.O. Box 33  
New London, Connecticut 06320

At 0914 on July 9, 1987, two passenger/car ferries collided near Orient Point, Long Island, New York, during dense fog. The M/V NORTH STAR, a 158-foot ferry, was southbound with 21 passengers on board; the M/V CAPE HENLOPEN, a 308-foot ferry, was northbound with approximately 250 passengers on board. Each ferry was being conned by its master who identified the other vessel on radar and established a meeting agreement by radiotelephone. The masters estimated that when the two ferries came in sight of each other approximately 40 to 100 feet apart, the NORTH STAR was traveling at a speed of about 11 knots, and the CAPE HENLOPEN was traveling at a speed of about 6 to 8 knots. Before the master of the CAPE HENLOPEN sighted the NORTH STAR, he put the ferry's engines full astern and its bow thruster on full thrust to the starboard in an attempt to avoid a collision. The master of the NORTH STAR put his ferry's engines full astern immediately after sighting the CAPE HENLOPEN. Although the masters had already applied right rudder to both ferries before they were in sight of one another, the port bow of the CAPE HENLOPEN collided with the port bow of the NORTH STAR. 1/

Despite the fact that the masters established a meeting by radiotelephone, they failed to establish a formal agreement about the distance to be kept between ferries and buoy 2PG when entering or leaving Plum Gut in Long Island Sound. Both the master of the NORTH STAR and the master of the CAPE HENLOPEN maneuvered at high speed close to one another near buoy 2PG in reduced visibility with only an agreement to meet on one whistle without further details. Consequently, when they did order their engines to be put full astern, it was too late to avoid a collision.

Cross Sound Ferry Services, Inc. (CSF) had no formal policy regarding operations in reduced visibility. A company operations manual presenting CSF policies and procedures for masters and crewmembers has been in the planning stage for 2 or

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Collision Between U.S. Passenger/Car Ferries M/V NORTH STAR and M/V CAPE HENLOPEN on Long Island Sound, Orient Point, New York, July 9, 1987" (NTSB/MAR-88/06).

more years. The section of the manual identifying the duties and responsibilities for masters and mates has been developed. The National Transportation Safety Board believes that, in addition to depending on the guidance in the Inland Navigation Rules and the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act, CSF should include in its operations manual a requirement for its masters to reduce speed while meeting under conditions of reduced visibility or to require masters to provide more detailed meeting agreements such as indicating distances between vessels and where each ferry would begin to turn under such conditions.

Although CSF company policy requires the crew to give an oral safety announcement before the start of each trip, the masters of the NORTH STAR and the CAPE HENLOPEN did not do so. Further, on the NORTH STAR there were no posted instructions on how to don personal flotation devices (PFD). If there had been a need to abandon ship, crewmembers would have had to instruct passengers on how to don PFDs. A safety announcement stating the location of PFDs and posted instructions describing how to don them would have facilitated this part of an emergency and would have provided crewmembers more time to launch liferafts and to assist injured persons. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that CSF should instruct its masters on the importance of implementing its policy on making an oral safety announcement and ensure that this policy is carried out.

As a result of the accident involving the MISSISSIPPI QUEEN on December 12, 1985, <sup>2/</sup> the Safety Board issued the following recommendation to the U.S. Coast Guard:

M-86-72

Require that all passengers receive a comprehensive safety briefing by a crewmember soon after boarding a passenger vessel.

The Coast Guard's reply of March 23, 1987, concurred with this recommendation and said its requirements would be included as part of a Coast Guard regulatory project to incorporate the 1983 Safety of Life at Sea Amendments into the Code of Federal Regulations. Safety Recommendation M-86-72 has been classified "Open--Acceptable Action."

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that Cross Sound Ferry Services, Inc.:

Include in the company operations manual being developed a requirement that when ferries are approaching each other in a close quarters situation in reduced visibility, that a comprehensive meeting agreement be established and that the ferries use a safe speed and if necessary take all way off and navigate with caution until danger of collision is over, as stated in the Inland Navigation Rules. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-45)

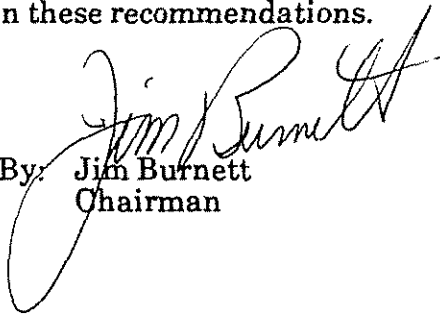
<sup>2/</sup> Marine Accident Report--"Collision Between U.S. Passenger Vessel MISSISSIPPI QUEEN and U.S. Towboat CRIMSON GLORY in the Mississippi River near Donaldsonville, Louisiana, December 12, 1985" (NTSB/MAR-86/09).

Instruct your masters in the importance of implementing your company policy that safety announcements be made at the beginning of each voyage to passengers on board company vessels. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-88-46)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation M-88-44 to the U.S. Coast Guard.

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 action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations M-88-45 and -46 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, KOLSTAD, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in these recommendations.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman