

**SAFETY DIGEST**  
**Lessons from Marine Accidents**  
**No 2/2014**

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October 2014

# MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) examines and investigates all types of marine accidents to or on board UK vessels worldwide, and other vessels in UK territorial waters.

Located in offices in Southampton, the MAIB is a separate, independent branch within the Department for Transport (DfT). The head of the MAIB, the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, reports directly to the Secretary of State for Transport.

This Safety Digest draws the attention of the marine community to some of the lessons arising from investigations into recent accidents and incidents. It contains information which has been determined up to the time of issue.

This information is published to inform the shipping and fishing industries, the pleasure craft community and the public of the general circumstances of marine accidents and to draw out the lessons to be learned. The sole purpose of the *Safety Digest* is to prevent similar accidents happening again. The content must necessarily be regarded as tentative and subject to alteration or correction if additional evidence becomes available. The articles do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability. The lessons often extend beyond the events of the incidents themselves to ensure the maximum value can be achieved.

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The Editor, Jan Hawes, welcomes any comments or suggestions regarding this issue.

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please call our 24 hour reporting line  
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# MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

The role of the MAIB is to contribute to safety at sea by determining the causes and circumstances of marine accidents and, working with others, to reduce the likelihood of such causes and circumstances recurring in the future.

Extract from  
The Merchant Shipping  
(Accident Reporting and Investigation)  
Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

*“The sole objective of the investigation of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”*

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**Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

AB	- Able Seaman	MCR	- Machinery Control Room
AFFF	- Aqueous Film Forming Foam	MGN	- Marine Guidance Note
AIS	- Automatic Identification System	MGO	- Marine Gas Oil
ALB	- All Weather Lifeboat	mph	- miles per hour
ASD	- Azimuth Stern Drive	OOW	- Officer of the Watch
BA	- Breathing Apparatus	PFD	- Personal Flotation Device
BNWAS	- Bridge Navigation Watch Alarm System	PPE	- Personal Protective Equipment
C	- Celsius	RIB	- Rigid Inflatable Boat
CCTV	- Closed Circuit Television	RNLI	- Royal National Lifeboat Institution
CO	- Carbon Monoxide	Ro-Ro	- Roll on, Roll off
COLREGS	- International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea 1972 (as amended)	RYA	- Royal Yachting Association
CPP	- Controllable Pitch Propellers	SOLAS	- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea
ECS	- Electronic Chart System	SOP	- Standard Operating Procedure
FRC	- Fast Rescue Craft	STCW Code	- International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers 1978, as amended (STCW Convention)
GPS	- Global Positioning System	UHF	- Ultra High Frequency
GRP	- Glass Reinforced Plastic	UMS	- Unmanned Machinery Space
ISM Code	- International Safety Management Code	VHF	- Very High Frequency
kts	- knots	VTS	- Vessel Traffic Services
m	- metre		
"Mayday"	- The international distress signal (spoken)		
MCA	- Maritime and Coastguard Agency		

# Introduction



On the 7th August, the MAIB commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As I write this introduction, I cannot help but ponder the dreadful maritime disaster that provided the rationale for the establishment of this organisation.

On the 6th March 1987, the cross channel ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized soon after leaving the port of Zebbrugge. 193 passengers and crew lost their lives. The immediate cause of the accident was that the bow doors of the vessel had been left open as it left the harbour, allowing sea water to enter the main vehicle deck in large quantities. The resulting free surface effect destroyed the vessel's stability and the vessel capsized very quickly. The events leading to the capsizing were a mix of complacency, poor shipboard procedures and inadequate leadership, both afloat and ashore.

One could argue that the disaster proved to be a watershed for maritime safety, leading to not only the formation of the MAIB, but also greater emphasis on the direct responsibility shore managers have for safety, and which culminated in the industry's adoption of the ISM Code in 1998.

Whatever the ultimate benefits such dreadful accidents may have in shaping and improving international maritime legislation, I cannot avoid reflecting on the human cost. Even today, the surviving next of kin and loved ones of the 193 who lost their lives, and the others who were injured or mentally scarred during the accident are still trying to cope with the effects and consequences of that fateful day. I was particularly struck by a recent magazine article in which the daughter of one of the victims of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster described how she was still grieving the loss of her father today.

One of the consequences of a significant anniversary is that you become quite reflective about past achievements. Here are a few facts and figures which will probably not feature in any pub quiz but are none the less quite fascinating:

Since its formation in 1989, the MAIB has:

- raised reports on over 40,000 marine accidents and incidents
- conducted 1500 investigations
- published nearly 500 investigation reports, and
- made more than 3000 safety recommendations.

Looking ahead, an objective for this Branch should be to work even harder to influence and improve maritime safety such that seafarers, the travelling public and their friends and families no longer have to suffer the consequences of avoidable accidents and there is no longer a need for accident investigation organisations like the MAIB - sadly, intuition gained from more than 40 years in this industry tells me this is an unlikely goal and leads me to expect an invitation to commemorate the MAIB's 50th anniversary, should I live that long.

I am indebted to John Garner, Robert Greenwood and Mark Ranson for their insightful introductions to the three sections of this edition of the Safety Digest. I hope you will find the following articles, and the safety lessons they contain useful and instructive.

Until next time, keep safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Clinch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Steve Clinch  
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents  
October 2014