



**SHIPOWNERS**  
SECURITY FOR SMALL & SPECIALIST VESSELS

## ▶ CASE STUDY

# ABANDONED FISHING VESSEL WITH SUBSEQUENT LOSS OF LIFE

### The incident

A fishing vessel was trawling when the weather deteriorated significantly. The gear was retrieved while crew continued to work fish on the open factory deck. The vessel's course was altered to put the weather on the stern. In the late afternoon, an accumulation of water was noted on the port main deck. A decision was made to alter course to stem the weather.

As the vessel's course was being altered, a swell came onboard from the side. The vessel rolled but did not recover and 'hung' in that position. A second swell followed the first, with the vessel remaining heavily listed. The port passageway on the main deck was filled with water. Shortly thereafter, with the main engine having stopped due to low LO pressure caused by the list, the decision was made to abandon ship. A number of seafarers lost their lives while in the water waiting for rescue.

The abandoned vessel was subsequently towed into port, having righted herself overnight.

### Observations

- The inquiry found that the loose gear blocking the freeing ports, reducing the amount of water that could drain from the main deck, may have been a contributory factor in the vessel not immediately righting itself.
- The decision of whether or not to remain onboard in a distress situation should be carefully considered as in some circumstances, remaining onboard even in dire circumstances, may be the best option.
- The seawater temperature in the area of the incident was reported as being approximately 16 degrees Celsius. Expected survival time in water of this temperature is subject to a number of variables such as sea state, air temperature, fitness, in-water competence, seasickness and dehydration. Survival time may be as little as 1 hour.

To improve chances of survival, vessel owners are strongly advised to disseminate the following two IMO circulars to all their vessels and ensure the crew are familiar with the contents:

*MSC.1/Circ.1185/Rev.1/30 November 2012/Guide for cold water survival techniques*

*MSC.1/Circ.1182/Rev.1/21 November 2014/Guide to recovery techniques*

### Training ideas

- Regular drills and training should be carried out concentrating on the contents of the above two IMO circulars on; cold water survival techniques and recovery techniques.
- Crews should be reminded of good housekeeping practices onboard vessels and the importance of maintaining high standards in all areas of the vessel.

**Please note that this case study has been extracted from the [South African Maritime Authority \(SAMSA\) Marine Notice 27 of 2016](#).**

