



**SHIOWNERS**

SECURITY FOR SMALL & SPECIALIST VESSELS



## ▶ Passenger cruise vessel runs aground on reef

On 15 March 2010 a small passenger cruise vessel was approaching a harbour in the Galapagos Islands when it ran aground on a reef.

Vessel type  
Passenger



## Insight

This incident highlights the need for crew to understand and utilise all forms of navigational aids available to them when monitoring their vessel's passage, as well as the danger of overreliance on one sole method of navigation, in this case visual observations. It also shows the importance of ensuring that all crew have noted and understood any Notices to Mariners that have been issued.



## The incident

The cause of the incident, which happened during the hours of darkness, was an error made by the helmsman. He mistook one lighthouse, for a much nearer lighthouse, which was temporarily out of operation. In his confusion he made a sudden course adjustment without the Master's authorisation, taking the vessel out of the channel and onto the rocks. The lighthouse was known to be out of operation and the appropriate notices had been given by the authorities in respect of this. The vessel had fully operational GPS, radar, and all the navigational aids required by flag state.

Following the grounding the vessel listed heavily and the 16 passengers and eight crew had to abandon ship. Access to lifeboats was made more difficult by the list and the action of waves over the reef. Nonetheless, all passengers were safely ashore and in local hotels within a very short period of time.

## Outcome

The passengers were maintained ashore whilst arrangements were made for their onward travel, including replacement of passports and travel documents.

Our Member subsequently faced claims for compensation from the passengers for loss of enjoyment and emotional distress, which the Club defended and negotiated on their behalf, reaching a global settlement that also covered their lost possessions.

The vessel was declared a wreck shortly after the grounding and the Galapagos National Park authorities ordered the wreck removed. This was managed by the Club, with the aid of our local Correspondent, and in consultation with the Galapagos National Park authorities. Environmental considerations were of up most importance during this procedure. This was ultimately achieved without penalty, despite the environmentally sensitive location.

## Observations

Working closely with the local authorities enabled the Club to find a cost effective solution for the disposal of the scrap from the wreck. By using a BIMCO Wreckstage contract, and utilising local expertise and manpower where possible, the Club was able to manage the cost of the wreck removal, even when the period and number of final sweeping-up visits became extended by several months.

Total cost of the claim: **US\$ 832,993**

