



SHIPOWNERS

SECURITY FOR SMALL & SPECIALIST VESSELS

▶ CASE STUDY

Death of a snorkeler

The Incident

The vessel was carrying passengers to a designated dive site to carry out snorkelling activities.

Upon arrival at the site a *Dive Site Risk Assessment* Form was completed by the Chief Officer on board, who noted the sea to be slightly choppy with a medium current. He considered the undertaking of the day's diving activities in such conditions to carry a risk score of 'medium'. Based on this assessment, the crew proceeded to carry out the required safety briefings, using company issued information booklets and procedures. All passengers were verbally advised of the risks associated with snorkelling. The crew also asked passengers to make any medical conditions known.

The passenger concerned in the incident had read and signed a medical declaration form, affirming that he was not suffering from any medical conditions. However, being overweight and over 50 years old, the passenger fell into the operator's high risk category for a male, and so the passenger had advised the Chief Officer that he was not likely to snorkel and may just swim.

Shortly after the male passenger entered the water, he was observed by the ship's crew lying motionless in the water.

Observations

The dive company's *In-Water Operations Manual* states that as a minimum, all guests reporting a medical condition are advised to wear a floatation device, have a visible marking in the form of coloured tape on their snorkel, remain close to the rope trails and must snorkel with a buddy. They are only allowed to snorkel within a restricted area so as to keep their exertion to a minimum and under strict supervision of designated crew.

Preventative actions

To prevent incidents such as this, the following actions should be implemented:

- A review of how passengers who fall into the high risk category can be better monitored when they are in the water, irrespective of whether they intend to take part in diving activities, is recommended.
- It is recommended that guests who, upon visual assessment, appear to fall into the high risk category are individually made aware of the risks involved in partaking in such activities and that the relevant controls are put in place to ensure their safety.
- A review of how the risk rating scores are determined for medical conditions by the operator, and further training for crew on the implementation of associated safety measures.
- The importance of monitoring time in/time out of passengers who have been listed on the risk assessment should be reinforced and further crew training provided. This also needs to be regularly monitored.

Financial Cost

In this case a claim was not raised. It is hoped that circulating this advice will assist the mitigation of similar incidents which may result in not just a financial claim but also the death of passengers.