

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY

THOMSON CELEBRATION:

Fatal Accident to Crew Member During Passenger Tender Recovery



On the afternoon of 26 September 2006, the passenger vessel *Thomson Celebration* prepared to depart from the anchorage at St Peter Port, Guernsey. All passengers had been confirmed on board and the passenger tenders were recalled for recovery. As one of the tenders, *Tender 15*, was being manoeuvred under the falls, it was affected by the 1.5 knot tide and the driver lost full control. A member of the tender's crew became trapped between the ship's side and the tender coach house as the boat came heavily alongside the ship. He received fatal crush injuries to his upper chest.



The coxswain of the tender was an AB / quartermaster who was considered qualified to command the boat by virtue of his survival craft proficiency certificate and some unspecified in-house training.

The launch/recovery position for *Tender 15* was in way of the part of the hull where it began to taper away from the parallel side towards the transom. In this position the boat's coach house roof was able to contact the ship's side if the boat accidentally came alongside.

Passenger tenders are generally designed with a dual purpose to act as both lifeboat and passenger tender and they form part of the ship's statutory lifesaving equipment. However, these craft are generally much larger and faster than a traditional lifeboat and, when being used as a tender, they fulfil a completely different and important role on board. The passenger capacity and speed of these craft have increased over the years and now some passenger tenders are able to carry over 150 passengers, at speeds of over 20 knots.

Nevertheless, there are no international minimum competency standards applicable to the coxswain or crew of a passenger tender over and above those required for a lifeboat. Many passenger ship operators, including the operators of *Thomson Celebration*, provided additional in-house tender drivers' courses, however their structure and content varied significantly. The training provided to the tender crews on *Thomson Celebration* was not well implemented, monitored or verified. Crucially, the crews were given instruction on how to approach the ship's side, in fine conditions, and the possibility that the tenders may need to make an approach in a significant tidal stream was not considered.

There are no agreed standards for the design and equipping of passenger tenders over and above those pertaining to their role as a lifeboat. Individual classification societies have developed their own standards but, given that some tenders can carry over 150 passengers at high speed, to remote destinations, there appears a need for standards to be developed and applied across the industry.

The MAIB is aware of over 50 accidents to passenger tenders. These incidents only represent those reported from a fraction of the world's passenger vessel fleet and it is reasonable to assume, therefore, that a real and potentially dangerous problem exists.

Safety Issues:

- Where a lifeboat is operated as a passenger tender, great responsibility is placed on the coxswain and crew, and it is reasonable to expect them to be highly skilled in this task. This accident, and a number of others, highlights the need for internationally agreed standards of training and certification of tender coxswains and crews, covering the handling, navigation and general safe operation of lifeboats operating as passenger tenders.
- There is a need for internationally agreed standards for the design and equipping of boats that are used as passenger tenders, given that many carry large numbers of passengers to remote destinations.
- Where feasible, bearing in mind the frequency with which passenger tenders may be deployed and recovered, ship designers should site them in way of the ship's parallel side.

Further details on the accident and the subsequent investigation can be found in the MAIB's investigation report, which is posted on its website: www.maib.gov.uk

Alternatively, a copy of the report will be sent on request, free of charge.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

Carlton House

Carlton Place

Southampton, SO15 2DZ

Telephone 023 8039 5500

Email: maib@dft.gsi.gov.uk

June 2007