



USCGD17 SAFETY ALERT: PV003-2006

July 19, 2006

Juneau, AK

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Small Passenger Vessel Safety Alert program was developed to provide timely safety related information to mariners of “lessons learned” from marine casualties. This program is part of an ongoing effort to apply Prevention through People (PTP) principles to improve safety.

Incident: A 48-foot passenger vessel carrying 16 passengers and 3 crew struck a rock in the vicinity of Siginaka Islands, Sitka Sound, Alaska and sustained damage to the port hull with flooding in the engine room and fuel void. All passengers were safely evacuated to the shore with no injuries. The vessel captain intentionally grounded the bow of the vessel on a beach to stabilize the vessel and minimize additional flooding. Flooding was controlled by a combination of pumps available on board and additional pumps provided by USCG and Sitka Fire Department. On scene damage control reduced water levels in damaged compartments, and as lightering continued, the vessel was moved further up the beach with rising tide. Temporary repairs were made on scene, the vessel re-floated and towed to repair facility

Initial Lessons Learned: Although the cause of the incident is under investigation, the company and USCG have identified some initial lessons learned and recommendations from this incident.

1. The intentional grounding of a vessel that is taking on water can be effective in preventing sinking.
2. Customized charts: Operators should develop and keep readily accessible “customized charts” that clearly identify hazards along routes, danger bearings and distances from hazards, and other information to help ensure safe navigation. Designating “no transit zones” for areas deemed overly hazardous for operation, or “caution zones” that may only be transited at slow speed are recommended.
3. Restricting Passengers from Bridge: When a vessel is operating in low visibility, confined or congested waters, and other critical operations, passengers should be kept from the pilothouse. Where the smaller size or design of some vessels allows passengers to be in close proximity to the vessel captain, companies are encouraged to inform passengers in literature and during safety briefings that the captain can not engage in conversations unless the vessel is in deep water and not engaged in critical navigation duties.
4. Safety Audits: Safety and operational audits to identify and correct potential problems should be conducted by senior personnel on a regular basis, but especially early in the season after the arrival of new employees. Occasional independent no-notice audits should be considered to put a fresh “set of eyes” on your operational and safety procedures.
5. Emergency Preparedness: Operators should develop and keep readily accessible emergency check lists that outline actions the crew should take in the event of grounding, fire, medical evacuation, and taking on water, abandon vessel or other emergency. Operators in Alaska are encouraged to utilize the USCG Damage Control Simulator, and maintain a basic damage control kit on board each vessel.
6. Situational Awareness: Operators should review lessons learned from other marine casualties and continually stress and train their crews to ensure navigation, seamanship and rescue skills are honed. In particular, the USCG reminds all operators to maintain their situational awareness, avoid excessive speed in near shore and ice congested waters, and not to be over reliant on a single piece of equipment or maneuver to avoid a collision or grounding.