



# Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung

## Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

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276/21

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**Date**

**8 December 2022**

### **PRESS RELEASE No. 13/22**

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) hereby announces the publication of the Investigation Report 276/22 on 8 December 2022. The report deals with the foundering of the sailing boat SILJA and the death of a crewmember. The report is available for download at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/News>

#### **Foundering of the sailing boat SILJA and death of a crewmember in the sea area Accumer Ee on 26 August 2021**

At 1749<sup>1</sup> on 26 August 2021, the seven-meter sailing boat SILJA capsized while sailing from Juist to Langeoog, coming from sea, in the area of the barre<sup>2</sup> south of the approach to the Accumer Ee tidal inlet. As a consequence of the boat capsizing, three people, a woman and two men, each aged in their early 20s, went overboard. The boat foundered about 30 minutes later. At 1827, the boat's skipper managed to make an emergency call using a smartphone, after which an extensive rescue operation was launched.

About 3 hours after the capsizing, a rescue cruiser spotted the first sailor, lifeless and floating in the water wearing a life jacket. While attempting to pull the sailor out of the water from a rescue boat, the buoyancy chamber tore off the vest and the sailor sank

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<sup>1</sup> Local time, Central European Summertime (UTC + 2 hours)

<sup>2</sup> Sand or mud bank with barrier effect for maritime shipping

into the sea. By the time, this report was published, he was not found. In all likelihood, he had already drowned before the recovery attempt.

At 2125, the woman was spotted in the water and rescued by the crew of a SAR-helicopter<sup>3</sup>. The same crew rescued the skipper about 30 minutes later. Both sailors wore life jackets whose buoyancy chambers had partly detached from the protective cover.

The SILJA capsized in particular due to short steep waves. In the area of the bar of the Accumer Ee tidal inlet, with an outgoing tidal current and an opposing wind sea of up to 2.5 meters in height generated by the strong onshore wind, which was gusty in gusts, ground seas and possibly surf waves had very probably formed.

In the BSU's view, neither the sailing maneuvers nor the boat size had a significant influence on the capsize.

Information from nautical publications (sea handbooks/guides) and nautical charts (electronic/paper) with warnings against navigating in sea gates in certain conditions was not used, or was overlooked.

Groundswell is a typical phenomenon for tidal inlets in the underlying conditions described above. The hazard is also typical for all sea areas with comparable natural conditions. In particular, river mouths and harbor entrances should be mentioned here, if waves coming from the sea meet a rapidly decreasing water depth there.

The investigation reports deals in detail with the question as to whether the skipper had not planned the route<sup>4</sup> in the manner required for this sea area. In this context, the acquisition of a pleasure boating navigation license for the scope of application of Navigable Maritime Waterways (SBF-See) was considered in more detail and a safety recommendation with respect to the examination requirement prepared.

Further safety relevant aspects on pleasure boats having influenced the marine casualty and the rescue measures significantly were investigated. This includes particularly:

- Use and provision of sailing handbooks and other nautical publications as well as their content-related statement
- The use of life jackets
- The use of smartphones as navigation- and distress device
- Provision of adequate signaling means
- Composition of the crew

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<sup>3</sup> SAR; Search and Rescue

<sup>4</sup> The investigation report uses the term „route“ within the meaning of a planned stretch, the term “sailing trip” within the meaning of a voyage

This results in several safety recommendations. At the same time with the publication of this investigation report, the BSU published general lessons learned on [www.bsu-bund.de](http://www.bsu-bund.de) (there Lessons Learned 13) especially addressing pleasure boat skippers<sup>5</sup>.

All investigation reports, safety recommendations and other information published by the BSU are available at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications>.

Ulf Kaspera  
Director

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<sup>5</sup> The publication of „Lessons Learned“ by investigative authorities is based on a resolution of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2018.