



**Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung**  
**Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation**  
Federal Higher Authority subordinated to the Ministry of Transport  
and Digital Infrastructure

Investigation Report 46/16

**Very Serious Marine Casualty**

**Fatal accident**  
**on board the FV PESORSA DOS**  
**on 8 February 2016 in the**  
**North Atlantic**  
**west of Ireland**

2 February 2017

The investigation was conducted in conformity with the Law to improve safety of shipping by investigating marine casualties and other incidents (Maritime Safety Investigation Law – SUG) of 16 June 2002, amended most recently by Article 1 of 22 November 2011, BGBl. (Federal Law Gazette) I p. 2279.

According to said Law, the sole objective of this investigation is to prevent future accidents and malfunctions. This investigation does not serve to ascertain fault, liability or claims (Article 9(2) SUG).

This report should not be used in court proceedings or proceedings of the Maritime Board. Reference is made to Article 34(4) SUG.

The German text shall prevail in the interpretation of this investigation report.

Issued by:  
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## 1 Summary

At about 1640<sup>1</sup> on 8 February 2016, the fishing vessel PESORSA DOS was struck by a large wave during a fishing voyage in the North Atlantic. Two of the 17-man crew were washed overboard. During the immediately initiated rescue operation, one fisherman was able to get back on board, while the other one drowned within sight distance.

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<sup>1</sup> All times shown this report are UTC

## 2 FACTUAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 Photo



Figure 1: Photo of the ship

### 2.2 Ship particulars

Name of ship:	PESORSA DOS, formerly INEZ-CHRISTIN
Type of ship:	Fishing vessel
Nationality/Flag:	Germany
Port of registry:	Hamburg-Finkenwerder
IMO number:	7360930
Call sign:	DIFC
Fisheries code:	HF 564
Owner:	SEAMAR GmbH, Lübeck
Year built:	1974
Shipyard/Yard number:	Julius Diedrich, Oldersum, new build 124
Classification society:	Germanischer Lloyd
Length overall:	27.77 m
Breadth overall:	6.62 m
Gross tonnage:	196
Deadweight:	85 t
Draught (max.):	2.80 m
Engine rating:	KHD, 412 kW
Hull material:	Steel
Minimum safe manning:	6

### **2.3 Voyage particulars**

Port of departure:	A Coruña, Spain
Port of call:	Castletown, Ireland
Type of voyage:	Merchant shipping/ fishing (international)
Cargo information:	Fish
Manning:	17
Pilot on board:	No
Number of passengers:	None

## 2.4 Marine casualty or incident information

Type of marine casualty or incident:	Very serious marine casualty; one seaman lost his life
Date, time:	08/02/2016 at about 1640
Location:	North Atlantic, west of Ireland
Latitude/Longitude:	$\phi$ 52° 56.7'N $\lambda$ 014° 39.6'W
Ship operation and voyage segment:	At sea
Place on board:	Deck
Human factors:	Yes, violation
Consequences (for people, ship, cargo, environment, other):	One seaman lost his life

Excerpt from Nautical Chart BA 4011 North Atlantic Ocean

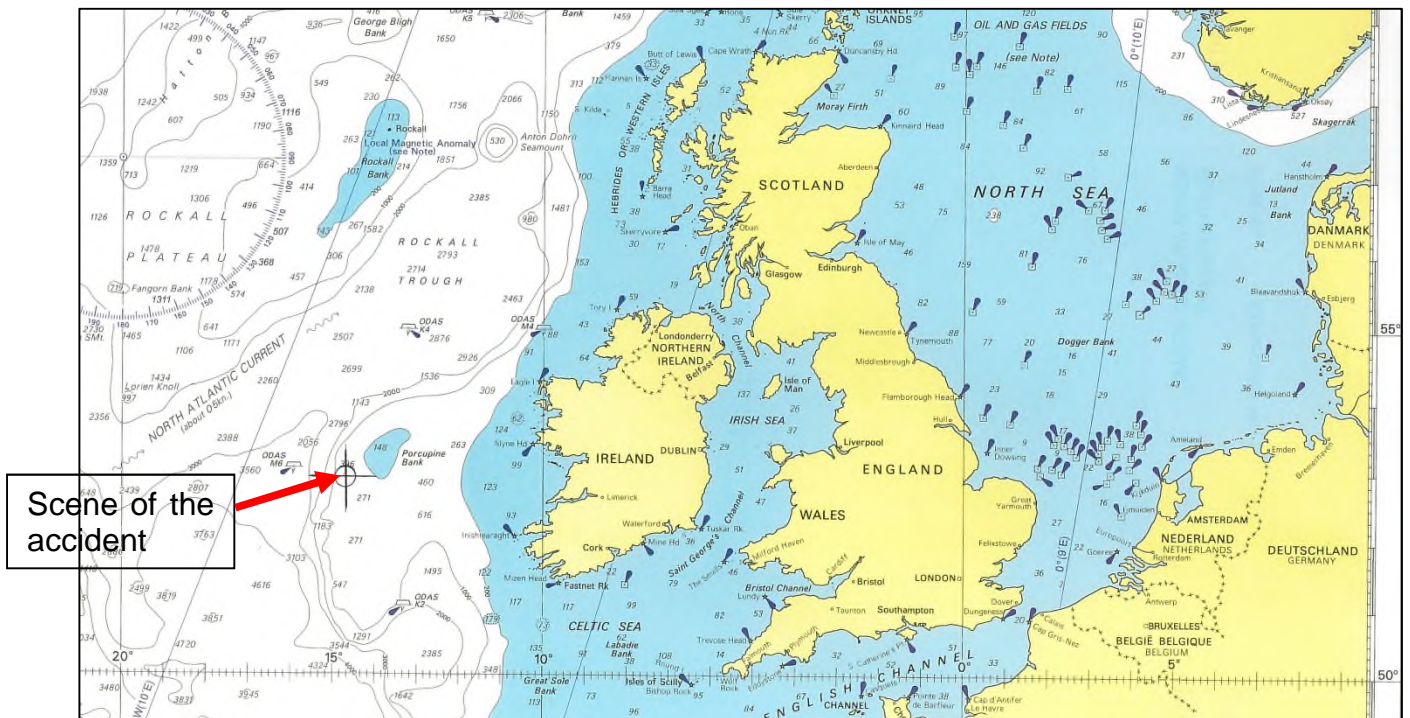


Figure 2: Nautical chart



## 2.5 Shore authority involvement and emergency response

Agencies involved:	MRCC Valentia, Ireland
Resources used:	Rescue plane
Actions taken:	Search for person
Results achieved:	Person not rescued and missing

### **3 COURSE OF THE ACCIDENT AND INVESTIGATION**

#### **3.1 Course of the accident**

On 8 February 2016, fishing did not take place on the VIIc2 fishing area due to poor weather and storms. The sea and gale force wind approached from astern on the port side. During the watch below in the afternoon, five seamen were occupied with re-lashing non-fastened equipment that was making a noise on deck. Two people were situated astern, two amidships on the starboard side, and one person was on the foredeck.

At about 1640, an unexpected wave broke over the PESORSA DOS and she heeled violently to starboard, causing the bulwark and deck to be submerged. At the same time, the two seamen situated amidships in the area of the bridge door were washed overboard.

Action was taken to rescue the two seamen overboard immediately.

The 24-year-old seaman overboard swam back to the ship. He was at the side of the ship within six to seven minutes and able to climb back on deck unassisted.

The second seaman, who was 46 years old, was about 50 metres away from the ship and suddenly stopped calling. Shortly after, those on deck saw him floating motionless in the water with his mouth pointing downwards and then disappear from the surface of the water.

#### **3.2 Investigation**

The Lübeck-based owner notified the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation of the accident at about 0830 (local time) on 9 February. Due to the accident, the owner ordered the ship to return to A Coruña.

The BSU carried out an investigation on board in A Coruña on 4 August 2016.

The skipper of the PESORSA DOS and the legal counsel of the owner were present and gave a full account of the facts.

The skipper had ample fishing experience and was engaged as a skipper on a rescue cruiser for a long period prior to working for the owner.

The log book and questioning indicated that the PESORSA DOS sailed out of A Coruña with 17 crew members on board for a fishing voyage in the North Atlantic on 4 January. The fishing grounds are situated in the VIIc2 fishing area west of Ireland.



Figure 3: Fishing area in the North Atlantic

The PESORSA DOS fished there using gill nets until 30 January 2016 and then sailed into Castletown, Ireland, at about 2200 to unload the catch. At about 1230 on 31 January, she sailed back to the fishing grounds and then set her gill nets there again.

According to the skipper, none of the seamen on deck wore a lifejacket. The two seamen washed overboard were wearing rain trousers and rubber boots. Those on deck saw that they both removed the trousers and rubber boots while swimming.

The guard rail on the bridge deck was damaged by the wave, the bridge's wooden access door, including frame, was destroyed, and the EPIRB was washed overboard. Since the water at the steering wheel was about 60 cm deep, several electronic devices failed. The skipper immediately sounded the general alarm. The mayday emergency call was sent to Valentia MRCC in Ireland on border wave and to all ships on VHF channel 16.

The skipper started the search and rescue operation immediately after the accident. Communication with Valentia MRCC, which advised that it was not possible to deploy a helicopter due to the distance from the coast, was conducted on border wave. A rescue plane (Cessna C252) was ordered to fly to the scene and provide support. This plane identified the position of the EPIRB buoy and gave instructions to recover the buoy. Following that, the search for the drowned seaman was aborted at about 2215.

Owing to the poor visibility and electrical problems due to the flooding of the bridge, it was not possible to recover the buoy in spite of wide-ranging manoeuvres. Accordingly, the recovery attempt was discontinued at about 2355.

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Location on board:



Scene of the accident

Figure 4: Stern with nets

The above Figure 4 shows the PESORSA DOS with the loaded nets and marker buoys used for fishing. During the accident, only a few of the buoys were stowed on the upper deck, as almost all the nets were deployed.



Figure 5: Position of the seamen before the accident



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Figure 5 shows the approximate position of the two seamen washed overboard. The height of the guard rail from the upper edge of the wood cover is 92-94 cm; from the steel deck, it is about 100 cm.



Figure 6: Destroyed wheelhouse door



Figure 7: Door frame

During the accident, the wheelhouse door broke in two at the middle and its frame broke away from the steel surround and washed into the bridge structure.

## **4 ANALYSIS**

The following analysis deals with the circumstances that led to the accident and action taken to prevent such accidents in the future.

### **4.1 Weather report**

The Maritime Division of Germany's National Meteorological Service (DWD) was requested to prepare an official report on the weather and sea conditions in the sea area for the period of the accident.

#### Weather situation

On 8 February 2016, the area of the accident was affected by a zonal westerly current. The frontal zone stretched from the central North Atlantic to central Europe. Embedded in this, an extensive hurricane force depression (965 hPa) with strong windstorm areas tracked across the Shetlands into the Norwegian Sea.

The UK Met Office issued an official warning for the North Atlantic.

#### Wind

A humid unstable stratification of the atmosphere close to ground level with westerly force 7-8 Bft winds prevailed.

#### Significant sea state

The sea state stood at 10 m with a period of 15-17 seconds and was influenced predominantly by the level of wind. Significant swell did not materialise.

#### Temperature

Water temperatures stood at 8-10 °C; the air temperature at a height of 2 m above the water surface stood at 8 °C.

### **4.2 Course of the accident according to witness testimony**

The 17-man crew consisted of Spanish, Portuguese, and Ukrainian seamen. The casualty was a Portuguese national. For the experienced 46-year-old seaman who drowned, this was the first voyage on board the PESORSA DOS. His brother, also on board, was one of the two seamen situated on the ship's aft section who came to no harm.

The five crew members were on deck lashing equipment that was making a noise during their watch below without being instructed to by the skipper. They neither wore lifejackets nor were they secured by lines while carrying out this work. A single unforeseeable wave broke over the ship without prior warning. Due to the momentum and sudden list, the two crew members staying at the wheelhouse door, were washed overboard. One of the seamen overboard remained close to the ship and was able to get back on deck unassisted. The other seaman was initially responsive but had drifted further away and drowned shortly afterwards within sight distance.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Analysis of the accident**

The fatal accident is due to the fact that a single unforeseeable wave threw the ship on her side and washed the two crew members overboard.

In all likelihood, the drowning of the seaman would have been preventable if he was wearing a lifejacket (flotation waistcoat) and secured by a safety harness and line.

Chapter F 1.2 'Handbuch See' (sea manual) of the Ship Safety Division (BG Verkehr) stipulates this for heavy weather explicitly, regardless of whether a seaman operates during his watch below or normal hours of work.

According to the instructions given by the master, safety vests should be worn when staying on deck. These vests and the hard hats hang in the crossway of the superstructure and are available for everyone.

### **5.2 Measures taken after the accident**

The rescue and recovery operation carried out after the accident does not merit criticism.

### **5.3 Findings**

The accident happened without the involvement of another person and the drowning of the seaman could have been prevented by wearing a lifejacket.

The publication of safety recommendations has been dispensed with given existing regulations.

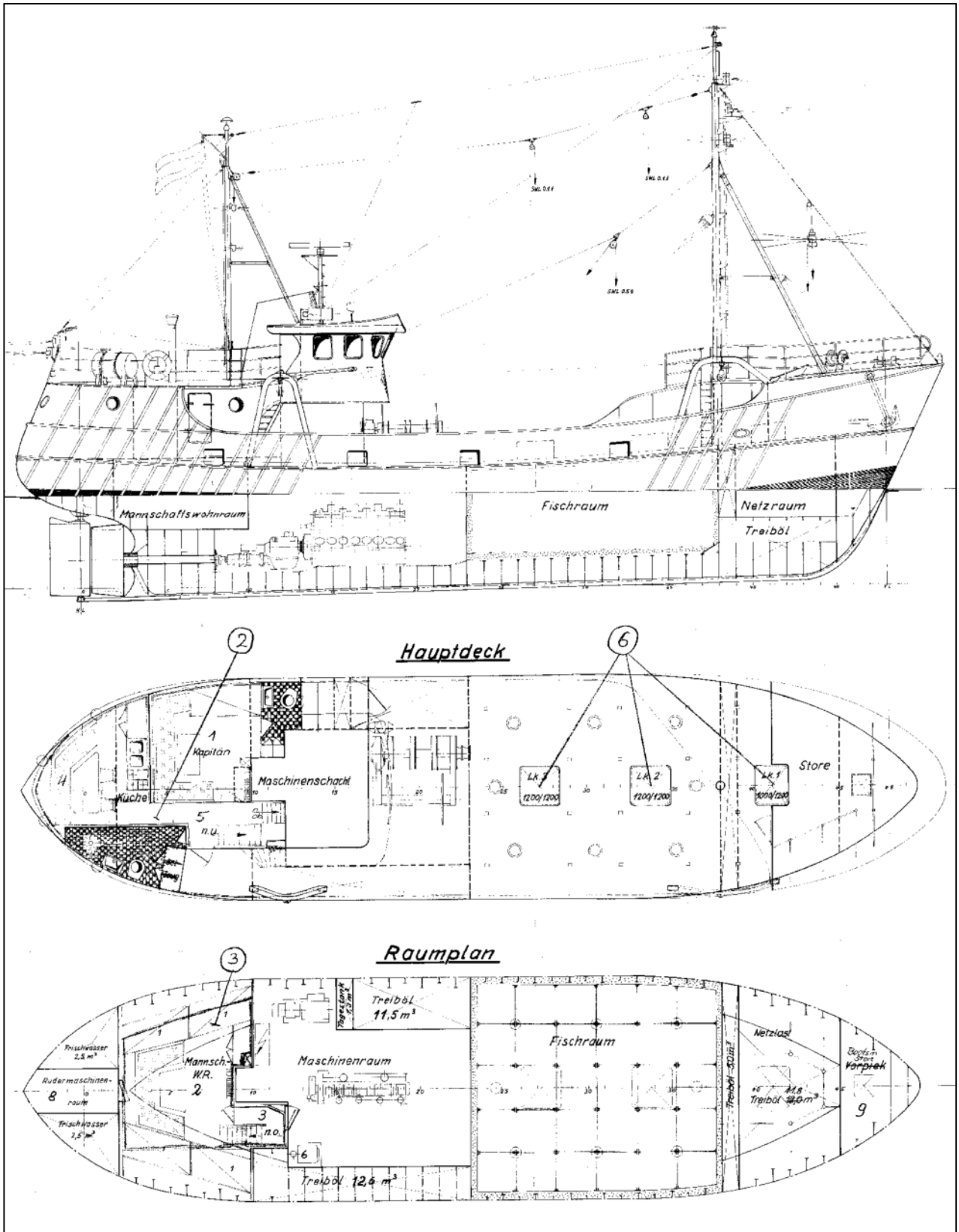
## **6 SOURCES**

- Enquiries of the BSU
- Written statements
  - Ship's command
  - Owner
- Witness testimony
- Official weather report by the DWD
- Documentation from the Ship Safety Division (BG Verkehr)
  - 'Handbuch See' (sea manual) of the Ship Safety Division (BG Verkehr) (accident prevention regulations)
  - Guidelines and codes of practice
  - Ship files



## 7 Annexes

### 7.1 General arrangement plan of the INEZ-CHRISTIN (1974 to 1999)



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## 7.2 General arrangement plan of the PESORSA DOS

