

# Investigation Report 240/04

1. May 2005

very serious marine casualty:

Sinking of SY MADAME PELE and drowning of two sailors off Borkum on 26 August 2004

## 1 Summary of the marine casualty

SY MADAME PELE was on a transfer voyage from Kappeln to Emden with two persons on board. On 29 August 2004 the mast top of the sailing yacht was discovered south of Brauerplaten in the Voorentief, and a little later the corpse of the skipper on the Kachelotplate. The co-sailor was washed ashore in the Netherlands on Rottumerplaat on 8 September 2004. The following course of the accident can be reconstructed from the radar records of the Revierzentrale Knock, the drift calculations and the statements by witnesses.

After sailing from Norderney on 26 August 2004 the vessel sailed until approx. 13:00<sup>1</sup> h and after that ran under engine power. It passed the Osterems buoys O5 and O6 at approx. 14:10 h and everything appears to have been in order on board until approx. 14:40 h. A complete failure of the vessel's electrical system with the navigation equipment and the radio set is considered probable in view of the arrangement of the load batteries. The vessel appears to have been drifting with bare poles, without engine and sail propulsion, with a course SSE towards Brauerplaten.

After 16:05 h the first grounding had evidently occurred and the vessel was pressed over the flat. The jib boom and the rudder only appeared to have broken off after the first ground contact.

At 16:36 h the radar echo had disappeared from the screen and the vessel sank in the deep water of the Voorentief at the southern edge of Brauerplaten.

It was not possible to ascertain precisely when the persons went over board.

## 2 Safety Recommendations

The sailing schools and sailing clubs providing training are called upon to draw the attention of water sports persons even more intensively to safety rules. If these rules, that are printed in the free BSH brochure "Sicherheit im See- und Küstenbereich" (Safety in Sea and Coastal Areas) are observed consistently, it should be possible to prevent accidents with a fatal outcome.

The instructors should point out that the minimal knowledge of seamanship tested in the licence examinations cannot replace practical experience in difficult sea areas. As is known, experience comes from doing, in other words the more nautical miles are navigated on water, the greater the practical knowledge learned in this way.

Owners and skippers are advised to observe the safety guidelines - Equipment and Safety of Sailing Yachts/Multiple-hull Boats of the Deutsche Segler-Verband (German Sailing Association) in the interest of their own safety and that of the vessel and the crew.

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<sup>1</sup> All the times mentioned in the report relate to Central European Summer Time (CEST)