

## **Investigation Report No. 300/21**

**Date: 15.03.2023**

**Serious marine casualty**

**Fire in the engine compartment with subsequent foundering of the fishing vessel FREYJA in Schleswig-Holstein's Wadden Sea during the night of 17 to 18 September 2021**

### **1 Summary**

A fire broke out in the engine compartment on the German fishing vessel FREYJA, which was manned by two fishermen, on the evening of 17 September 2021. At the time of the accident, the fishing vessel was anchored in the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea south-east of the island of Amrum. The rapid spread of the fire was accompanied by heavy smoke and left the two fishermen no time to fight the fire effectively but rather forced them to deploy the liferaft and abandon the fishing vessel.

The crew of a rescue helicopter that happened to be in the vicinity became aware of the accident and the liferaft after noticing a flare fired by the fishing vessel's skipper. The two shipwrecked fisherman, who had suffered minor injuries, were rescued quickly and taken to Heide Hospital.

It quickly became clear to the emergency services, which had been put on standby in the meantime, that further emergency measures were not necessary after the two crew members were rescued. The wooden vessel inevitably burnt out completely and foundered at about 0245<sup>1</sup>.

The emergency services monitored a spreading oil slick on the following day but it was extremely fragmented and began to dissipate as the day progressed. The nature and extent of the water pollution caused by the wreck of the fishing vessel therefore rendered extensive pollution control measures unnecessary.

Three weeks after the accident, the remnants of the fishing vessel were salvaged with the help of a floating crane, transported to Husum on two service vessels and inspected there by the waterway police (WSP) and an investigation team from the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU).

Due to the severe damage to the fishing vessel caused by the fire and her foundering, and the fact that this category of vessel does not have a voyage data recorder, it was not possible to determine the cause of the fire.

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<sup>1</sup> All times shown in this report are CEST (UTC + 2 hours).

## **2 Safety Recommendations**

The following safety recommendations do not constitute a presumption of blame or liability in respect of type, number or sequence.

### **2.1 German Social Accident Insurance Institution for Commercial Transport, Postal Logistics and Telecommunication (BG Verkehr) – Ship Safety Division –**

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation makes the following recommendations to the BG Verkehr (DS):

#### **2.1.1 Minimum safe manning document for fishing vessels (formal requirements)**

The summary table containing the personnel required for shipboard operations in the minimum safe manning document should include specific information on the necessary documents of competency and/or proficiency for each post and reference the relevant regulations.

#### **2.1.2 Minimum safe manning document for fishing vessels (substantive requirements)**

When issuing a minimum safe manning document, careful consideration should be given to the fact that the minimum crew complement stipulated and their required qualifications are actually sufficient to ensure, in particular, ship safety and compliance with occupational health and safety regulations for the benefit of everyone on board. Without exception, every crew member should have participated in basic safety training before being deployed on board. In this context, it is also recommended that on covered fishing vessels outside so-called restricted passive coastal fishing<sup>2</sup>, at least one crew member at the support level be required to have professional qualifications as a fish farmer. Should the BG Verkehr (DS) maintain its opinion that the relevant regulations are not sufficient to make the corresponding requirements, then it is suggested that this be reported to the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV) so that the latter can review and if necessary adapt the legal position.

#### **2.1.3 Performing surveys on and issuing safety certificates for coastal fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in length**

During the (periodical) surveys of the ship's safety installations and equipment, surveyors from the BG Verkehr (DS) should pay particular attention to the fire hazard posed by technical installations. The same applies to the existence and proper state of operation and maintenance of portable and permanently installed fire extinguishing equipment. If deficiencies are identified, the safety certificate should initially be issued only on a provisional and temporary basis. The safety certificate should not be allowed to have its full official effect up to the normal expiry date until it is demonstrated (by follow-up survey or the provision of other supporting documents) that all safety-related deficiencies have been rectified within the time limit.

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<sup>2</sup> See Section 9b SchBesV.

## **2.2 Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV)**

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the BMDV amend the provision on required radio equipment for fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in length contained in point 10 of Part 5 of Annex 1a to Section 6(1)(5) of the Ordinance for the Safety of Seagoing Ships. With regard to the outfitting requirements for covered fishing vessels of at least 15 metres in length engaged in coastal fishing up to a distance of 35 nautical miles from the coastline, a requirement of duplication should be considered for the EPIRB with integrated GPS receiver.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Renewal of Safety Recommendation 7.4 in BSU Investigation Report 44/16 of 5 October 2017.