

Chief Inspector's thoughts on Maritime Safety Week 2022

News story

As Maritime Safety Week begins, the MAIB will be publishing a series of blogs reiterating safety messages to the industry. Here Andrew Moll discusses fishing vessel safety.



Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, Andrew Moll OBE, said:

Today marks the start of Maritime Safety Week 2022, an important moment when the marine industry comes together to focus on how we can collectively continue to improve safety across the sector. As the MAIB has done in previous years, this week we plan to highlight a number of key areas of ongoing concern and reiterate the safety messages that the industry must note.

Today I am going to concentrate on fishing vessel safety, which continues to require my close attention. In 2021, ten commercial fishermen lost their lives and nine out of the 22 investigations commenced by MAIB last year involved commercial fishing vessels. However, we will not lose focus on improving safety and will continue to strive to understand the causes of accidents onboard fishing vessels so lessons can be learned and more tragedies can be averted in this most dangerous of professions.

Stability onboard fishing vessels is a significant ongoing safety issue. The recent reports looking into the tragic accidents onboard the potting vessels Nicola Faith and Joanna C have highlighted how modifications can compromise a vessel's stability. However, stability can also be compromised during fishing operations by, for example, overloading, which was the case in the accident involving Nicola Faith. The vessel had undergone several unapproved modifications, but our investigation found that the main trigger for the capsizing was severe overloading by a combination of catch

and fishing gear. The consequence in this accident was that all three crew members lost their lives.

At the start of Maritime Safety Week, I would encourage all skippers and crews to take a long hard look at their vessel's stability and ask themselves some potentially challenging questions. How much have modifications eroded our vessel's stability since it was built? Do we have a safe procedure for when the fishing gear becomes snagged or picks up a heavy load? Are we using the fish hold to best effect to minimise the weight on deck? I would urge crews to take a look at the [Nicola Faith](#) and [Joanna C](#) reports and heed the lessons the investigations identified.

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