

Nicola Faith report and safety flyer published

News story

Capsize and sinking of a whelk potter in Colwyn Bay, North Wales, with the loss of three lives



Today, we have published our fatal accident investigation report into the loss of Nicola Faith (BS58) along with all three of its crew on 27 January 2021.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and recommendations: [read more](#).

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

Yesterday we published our report into the loss of [FV Joanna C](#), and today are publishing the report into the loss of FV Nicola Faith. Both were small fishing vessels that capsized while working fishing gear and together, tragically, they account for the loss of five lives. There are important lessons about stability from these accidents that must be understood and acted upon by all small fishing boat operators.

The first lesson is that modifications, unless properly planned, can significantly erode a vessel's margin of stability. The scallop dredger Joanna C had been modified, but the process of assessing the effect of the alterations had not been completed before the vessel returned to fishing. Unfortunately, the modifications had eroded Joanna C's stability to the extent that simply snagging a dredge on a string of pots was enough to capsize the vessel. Tragically, only one of the three crew survived the accident. It is essential that skippers know the limitations of their vessels, and that any modifications to the vessel or changes to fishing methods

are properly assessed and approved before fishing resumes.

The second lesson is that any vessel can become unstable if overloaded. Nicola Faith had been modified, and the modification had not been approved. Nonetheless, the vessel could have been operated safely with care. On the day of the accident, the crew were relocating their pots to a new area and were carrying a full day's catch as well. The combined weight of the catch and fishing gear piled on deck was far more than the boat was designed to carry; it capsized, and all three crew were lost in that accident. Fishermen will always be tempted to land a big catch but moving fishing gear at the same time can be overwhelming.

As fuel prices soar, the temptation to carry more and do fewer trips makes economic sense, but where stability is concerned the results can be catastrophic.

Five families' lives have been shattered by these two accidents, both of which were entirely avoidable. To all fishing vessel crews I have this simple message:

Safety begins with good stability; know your boat's limitations and operate within them.

A [safety flyer](#) to the fishing industry summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned, has also been produced.

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