

FLYER TO THE LEISURE INDUSTRY

ORCA: accident leading to a fatality on 8 June 2014



Narrative

At 1331 on 8 June 2014 the dredger *Shoreway* and the sailing yacht *Orca* collided 7 miles off Felixstowe. Damage to *Orca* was catastrophic (**Figure 1**) and it sank within minutes of the collision. The yacht's skipper was rescued from the water by *Shoreway*'s rescue boat but the skipper's wife could not be found despite an extensive air and sea search. Her body was recovered from the sunken yacht by divers the next day. There was no damage to *Shoreway*.

Orca's skipper saw *Shoreway* when it was in the deep water channel outbound from Harwich Haven. *Orca* was under sail returning towards its marina berth in Harwich Haven. The skipper assumed the dredger would remain in the deep water channel and decided to engage his autopilot and go below for a short period. At this stage *Shoreway* was approximately 1.6 miles away and from its aspect, the skipper assessed there was no risk of collision. However, *Shoreway* altered course to leave the deep water channel soon after, placing *Orca* on a collision course. Despite the clear visibility and all navigation aids being available, the officer on watch on the bridge of *Shoreway* failed to see *Orca* until the collision was unavoidable.

The MAIB investigation found that the vessels collided in good visibility as neither the chief officer, who was alone on the bridge of *Shoreway*, nor the skipper of *Orca*, who was below deck in the cabin, were maintaining a proper lookout in the period immediately prior to the collision.

Safety lessons

- It is essential that all vessels maintain a proper lookout at all times. Had the crew of either *Shoreway* or *Orca* done so, this collision could have been avoided.
- Leisure boat users should never assume that they have been seen by other vessels, nor should they assume that the other vessels will always take avoiding action. Due to the good visibility, the officer on watch on *Shoreway* was not using his radar and had not seen the target of *Orca* that had been visible on his screen for 11 minutes before the collision.
- Leisure sailors need to be particularly aware of closing speeds between their own vessels and other vessels. In this case, *Shoreway* was travelling at 12.9kts but many types of vessels, including ferries, cruise ships and container ships, regularly sail at speeds over 25kts and, as a result, distances that initially appear sufficient can be reduced surprisingly quickly.

The following four pictures, taken from a stationary vessel, give an indication of how rapidly a vessel, in this case a dredger, can approach.



- *Orca's* skipper's automatic inflation lifejacket failed to inflate on immersion in the water as the CO₂ bottle was not correctly fitted to the inflation mechanism. To remain effective, inflatable lifejackets must be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website: www.gov.uk/maib

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