



National Transportation Safety Board

Marine Accident Brief

Sinking of Uninspected Fishing Vessel Plan B in Gulf of Maine

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| Accident no. | DCA12LM010 |
| Accident type | Sinking |
| Vessel | Uninspected fishing vessel <i>Plan B</i> |
| Location | Gulf of Maine, 10 nautical miles southeast of Kennebunkport, Maine 43°18.47' N, 70°14.46' W |
| Date | February 21, 2012 |
| Time | 0720 eastern standard time (coordinated universal time – 5 hours) |
| Injuries | None |
| Environmental Damage | Potential release of remaining diesel fuel and unknown quantity of lube oil |
| Weather | Clear skies, westerly winds 5 knots, visibility excellent, seas slight 2 to 4 feet, air temperature 32° F |
| Waterway characteristics | Ocean-coastal waters |

On February 21, 2012, the uninspected fishing vessel *Plan B* was in the Gulf of Maine, en route to Gloucester, Massachusetts. The two crewmembers, the captain and the deckhand, were in the process of draining water from the fish tanks when a pipe broke, allowing water to flood into the engine room. Attempts to stop the flooding were unsuccessful, and at 0720, the vessel sank in about 290 feet of water 10 nautical miles southeast of Kennebunkport, Maine. The captain and the deckhand were rescued and sustained no injuries.



The fishing vessel *Plan B* from the port side at the berth. The vessel's skiff on the stern was not on board at the time of the sinking.

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About 0430 that morning, the *Plan B* departed its berth in Portland, Maine. The crew had returned from a shrimping trip on February 17 and offloaded all shrimping gear and nets in preparation for the herring purse seine season. The purse seine gear was located in Gloucester and would be loaded on board once the vessel arrived there. The vessel was operated by Plan B Fisheries Inc., Gloucester; the captain owned 49 percent of the company.

The vessel was on a southerly course in the Gulf of Maine, making about 8 knots. Both outriggers were down for the transit, which the captain stated was standard for operating under way (the vessel's stability was better when the outriggers were down than when they were topped, or retracted). The captain also stated that keeping the fish tanks full of water helped to settle the vessel down. However, the captain told investigators that, on this particular transit, he wanted to arrive earlier in Gloucester. Therefore, he said he intended to drain the water from the fish tanks to reduce the vessel's weight and increase speed by about 1 knot.

While opening the starboard fish-hold tank valve (located in the main engine room) to dewater the fish tank, the pipe broke and allowed seawater to flood into the engine room through the 4-inch pipe. The captain attempted to run the vessel's pumps to remove the water; however, the pumps could not keep up with the ingress of water. He tried to plug the pipes to stop the flooding, but they failed to hold. About 30 minutes later, when the engine room was flooded about 3 feet deep, the captain called the US Coast Guard and said that the water had reached "almost to the engine, with secondary alarms starting to sound."

As the flooding increased, the captain was soaked by water and received shocks as electrical panels and wires were shorting. The continued flooding and the inability of the crew to arrest it led to the eventual sinking and total loss of the vessel and equipment. (The loss of a mechanically propelled vessel of 100 gross tons or more is classified as a major marine casualty.) The crew of a nearby good samaritan vessel, the lobster boat *Cameron Lee*, assisted the captain and the deckhand as they departed the sinking *Plan B*.



The *Plan B* listing to port before sinking. (Photo by Coast Guard)

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Neither the captain nor the deckhand was required to hold a Coast Guard license or any other mariner credentials. Both were tested for drug and alcohol, and all results were negative.

The status of *Plan B*'s navigational, mechanical, propulsion, steering, and other vital systems before the sinking could not be determined, but the captain stated that they were operational at the time of the accident.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the *Plan B* sinking was the inability of the crew to control flooding from the broken PVC (polyvinyl chloride) pipe, which was in open communication with the sea.

Vessel Particulars

| Vessel | <i>Plan B</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| Owner/operator | Plan B Fisheries Inc. Gloucester, Massachusetts |
| Nationality | United States |
| Type | Uninspected fishing vessel |
| Call sign | WDC9364 |
| Builder, date | Blue Streak Industries Chalmette, Louisiana, 1978 |
| Official number | 597355 |
| IMO number | n/a |
| Construction | Steel |
| Depth | 13.5 ft. (4.1 m) |
| Length | 80.7 ft. (24.6 m) |
| Width | 25.3 ft. (7.7 m) |
| Gross tonnage | 189 |
| Engine power and type | Single-screw marine diesel engine |
| Cargo | Empty |
| Crew complement | 2 |

For more details about this accident, visit <http://www.nts.gov/investigations/dms.html> and search for NTSB accident ID DCA12LM010.

Adopted: May 28, 2013

The NTSB has authority to investigate and establish the probable cause of any major marine casualty or any marine casualty involving both public and nonpublic vessels under 49 *United States Code* 1131. This report is based on factual information provided by the US Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident. The NTSB did not conduct its own on-scene investigation.