



# National Transportation Safety Board

## Marine Accident Brief

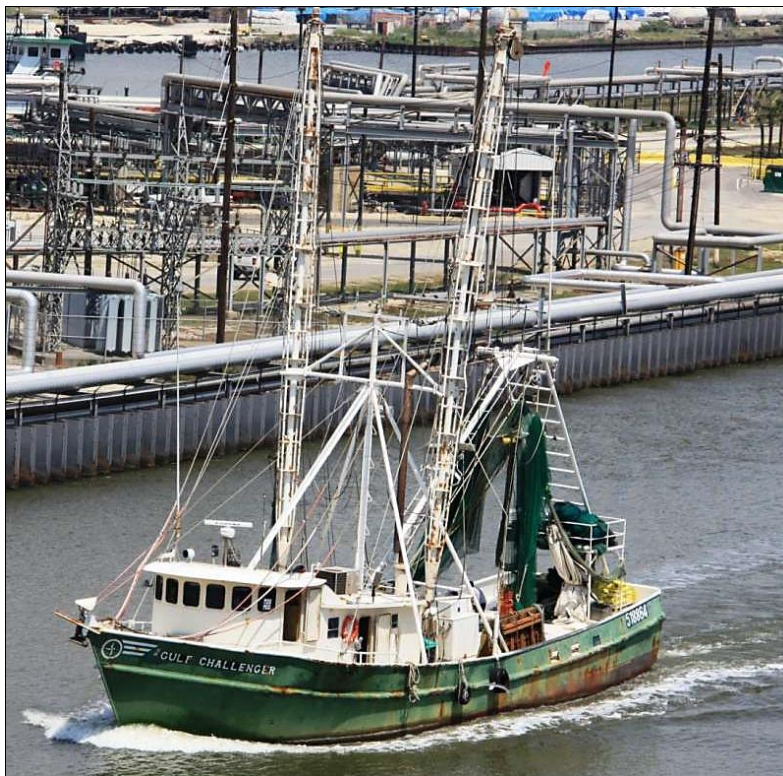
### Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*

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<b>Accident no.</b>	DCA15LM033
<b>Vessel name</b>	<i>Capt Richie Rich</i> (former names: <i>Lady Ingeborg</i> and <i>Gulf Challenger</i> )
<b>Accident type</b>	Sinking
<b>Location</b>	10 nautical miles (nm) southwest of Point au Fer, Louisiana; 29°15.0'N, 91°32.0'W
<b>Date</b>	August 30, 2015
<b>Time</b>	2200 central daylight time (coordinated universal time – 5 hours)
<b>Injuries</b>	None
<b>Property damage</b>	Loss of vessel over 100 gross tons
<b>Environmental damage</b>	Oil sheen sighted, potential release of 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel and unknown quantity of lube oil
<b>Weather</b>	South winds at 12 knots, seas at 4 feet, air temperature 83°F, water temperature 84°F
<b>Waterway information</b>	Atchafalaya Bay, Gulf of Mexico

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About 2200 on the evening of August 30, 2015, the uninspected fishing vessel *Capt Richie Rich* was under way and trawling for shrimp in coastal waters about 10 nm southwest of Point au Fer, Louisiana, when the port outrigger broke and holed the vessel's hull. The breach allowed water to enter the engine room, causing the vessel to list to starboard. It later sank partially in 12 feet of water. The three crewmembers, who abandoned the vessel into a liferaft, were rescued by the US Coast Guard; no one was injured. An oil sheen was observed in the area where the vessel sank.



*Capt Richie Rich* while still named *Gulf Challenger*.  
(Photo by "Captain Ted" from [www.shipspotting.com](http://www.shipspotting.com))

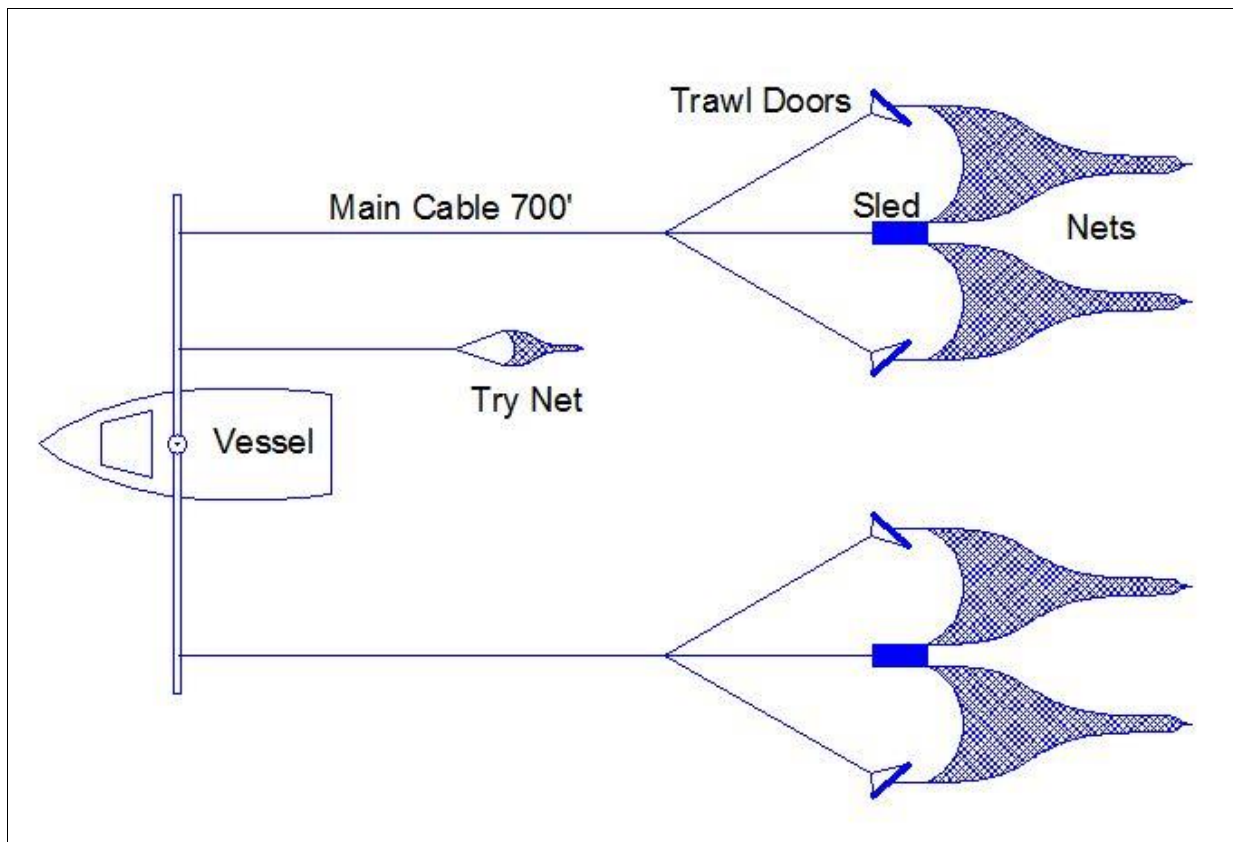
\* All miles in this report are nautical miles.

NTSB/MAB-16/14

Note: This report was reissued on April 3, 2017, with corrections to page 6.

### Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*

Postaccident interviews were conducted the day after the sinking. The crewmembers did not speak English very well and no translators were available at the time. According to the crew, the *Capt Richie Rich*, which was rigged for double-beam shrimp trawling, departed Houston, Texas, on an unknown date. The crew stated that about 2200 on the evening of August 30, 2015, as the *Capt Richie Rich* was trawling for shrimp, the port outrigger broke. A section that broke off penetrated the vessel's hull below the waterline and subsequently led to uncontrolled ingress of water into the engine room and a loss of electrical power.



**Trawling configuration similar to the one aboard *Capt Richie Rich*.**

The *Capt Richie Rich* listed slowly to starboard and then partially sank in 10–12 feet of water. The crewmembers stated that they did not have time to make a distress call before abandoning the vessel.

## Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*



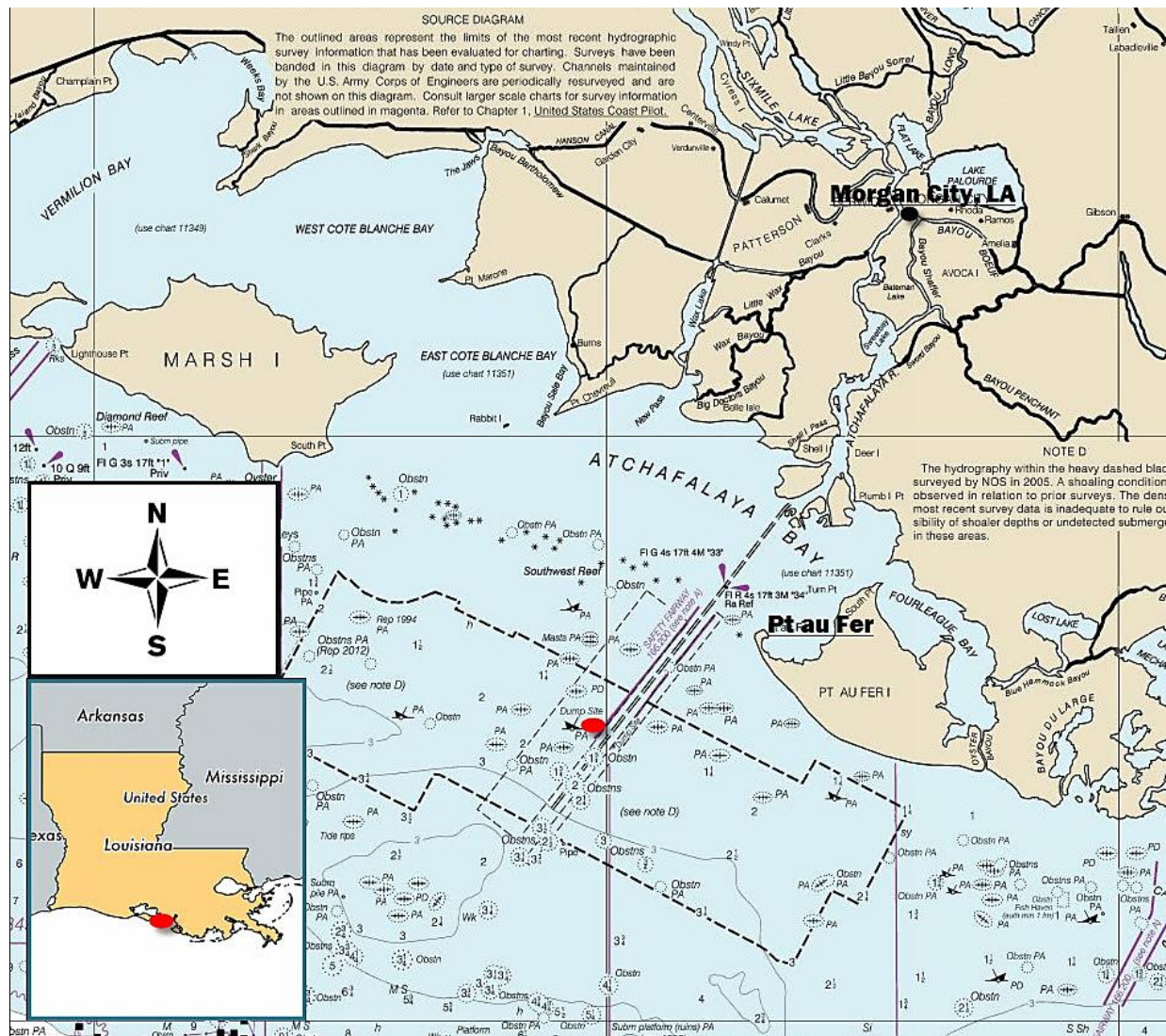
Partially sunken *Capt Richie Rich* resting on mud in 10–12 feet of water. The broken port outrigger is overlaid by a red circle. (Photo by US Coast Guard)

The crewmembers launched two liferafts and abandoned the *Capt Richie Rich*, taking with them the vessel's emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB). They then fired about 10 emergency flares, with no immediate sign of detection. After tying the liferaft to the *Capt Richie Rich*, the crewmembers waited for rescue. Based on their recount of events, they attempted to activate the EPIRB; however, no EPIRB alerts were received by the Eighth Coast Guard District command center in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was later determined that the crewmembers did not properly activate the EPIRB. Rather than turning on the beacon and leaving it activated, they were turning the device on and then off.

At 1154 on August 31, 2015, the crew on a passing commercially operated helicopter spotted both the liferaft and the partially sunken *Capt Richie Rich* and reported the situation to the Coast Guard. In response, the Coast Guard launched a short-range recovery helicopter (MH-65 Dolphin) crew from Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans and diverted a nearby 29-foot-long small response boat (RB-S) from Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Morgan City. A Good Samaritan vessel arrived on scene and located the survivors after they fired off another flare. Later, the RB-S crew safely rescued the three crewmembers who were subsequently transported to Morgan City.



## Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*



Red dots indicate the approximate location of *Capt Richie Rich*. (Background from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA] chart 11340)

On double-beam shrimp trawlers, such as the *Capt Richie Rich*, the tow wire used to deploy the fishing gear is paid out from the port and starboard deck winches through towing blocks located at the outermost end of each respective outrigger. This configuration allows the trawl boards, sled, and catch nets to be deployed independently of each other on the seafloor. To offset the tension on the outrigger that results from the tow wire and fishing gear being dragged on the sea floor, each outrigger deployed is held in place by stay wires that are made fast to the vessel's gunwale and mast. Based on images of the partially sunken *Capt Richie Rich*, it appears as if the outrigger frame fractured and failed just outboard of those securing points. Because of the language difficulty, investigators could not determine whether the failure was caused by poor maintenance, the fishing gear becoming snagged on a bottom obstruction, or a combination thereof.

When the owner of the *Capt Richie Rich* was contacted about removing the vessel, which was deemed a hazard to navigation, he initially stated that the vessel was uninsured and he did not plan to salvage it. As of the date of this report, resolution of the vessel's salvage plan is still ongoing.

## Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*



A Coast Guard overflight in February 2016 confirmed that *Capt Richie Rich* was still partially sunken in the same position. (Photo by Coast Guard)

### Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the sinking of fishing vessel *Capt Richie Rich* was a collapse of the port outrigger and a hull penetration resulting in uncontrolled flooding in the engine room.

## Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Capt Richie Rich*

### Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Capt Richie Rich</i>
<b>Owner/operator</b>	Private citizen (Houston, Texas)
<b>Port of registry</b>	Houston, Texas
<b>Flag</b>	United States
<b>Type</b>	Uninspected commercial fishing vessel
<b>Built</b>	Marine Builders, Inc. Mobile, Alabama; 1969
<b>Official number (US)</b>	518864
<b>IMO number</b>	7043104
<b>Construction</b>	Steel
<b>Length</b>	75 ft (22.9 m)
<b>Depth</b>	11.2 ft (3.4 m)
<b>Beam/width</b>	22.4 ft (6.8 m)
<b>Gross and/or ITC tonnage</b>	131 gross tons; 91 ITC tons
<b>Engine power; manufacturer</b>	235 kW; diesel
<b>Persons on board</b>	3

**NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Morgan City throughout this investigation.**

For more details about this accident, visit [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov) and search for NTSB accident ID DCA15LM033.

**Issued: August 17, 2016**

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 Title 49 *United States Code*, 1131. This report is based on factual information either gathered by NTSB investigators or provided by the Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for a marine casualty; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “[NTSB] investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties . . . and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person.” Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations*, 831.4.

Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by conducting investigations and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. Title 49 *United States Code*, 1154(b).