National Transportation Safety Board

Marine Accident Brief

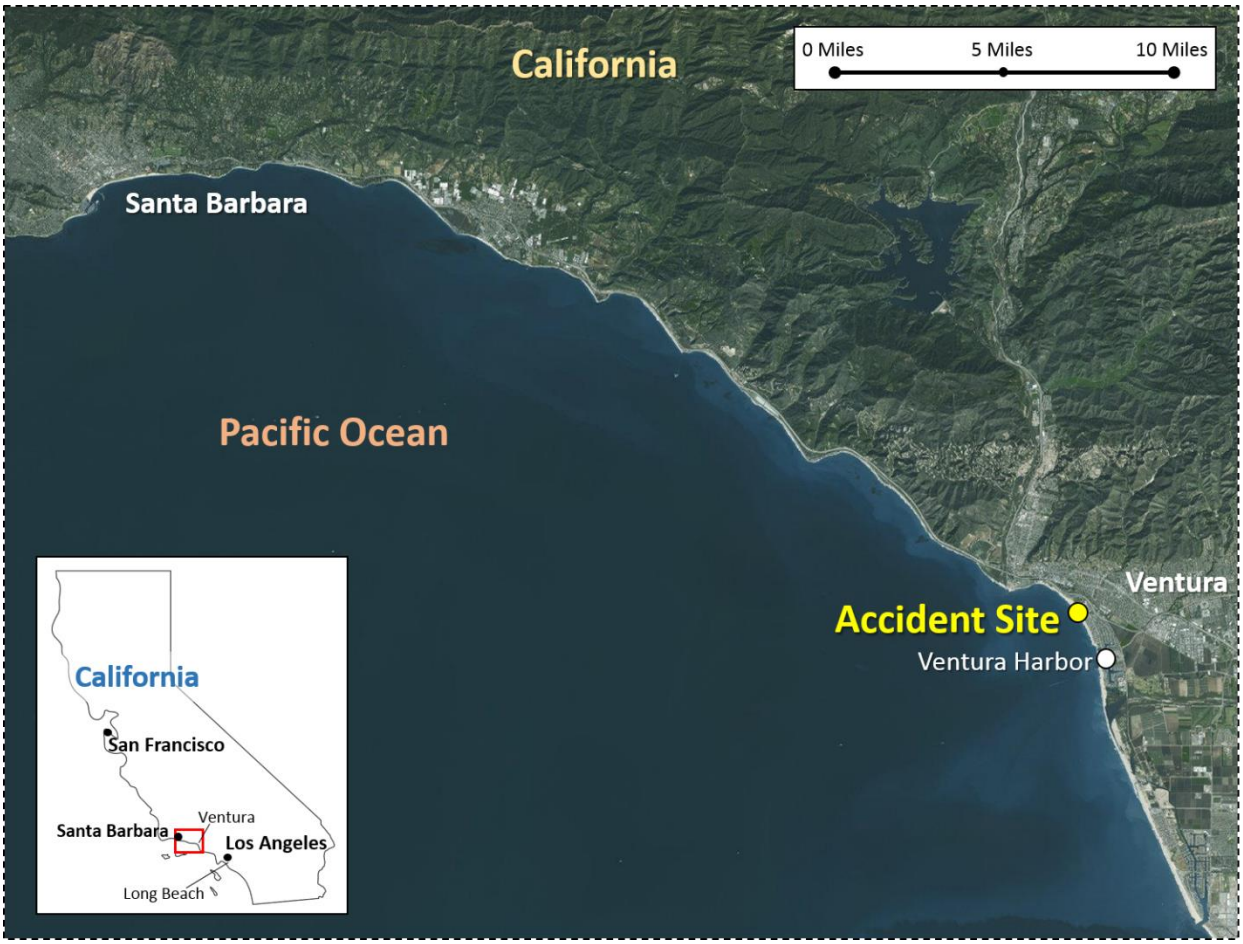
Grounding of Fishing Vessel *Day Island*

Accident no.	DCA16FM016
Vessel name	*Day Island*
Accident type	Grounding
Location	Ventura Beach, California
Date	January 10, 2016
Time	2035 Pacific standard time (coordinated universal time − 8 hours)
Injuries	None
Property damage	Constructive total loss of vessel; value undetermined due to vessel being uninsured
Environmental damage	None
Weather	No restrictions to visibility reported, light seas, winds west-northwest at 2–7 mph, air temperature 56°F
Waterway information	Ventura Beach is located within the San Buenaventura California State Beach Park on the Pacific Ocean, about 66 miles north of Los Angeles.

On January 10, 2016, at 2035 Pacific standard time, the uninspected commercial fishing vessel *Day Island* ran aground on Ventura Beach, California, in light seas. At the time of the accident, the vessel was en route to the commercial docks in Ventura Harbor, about a mile and a quarter south of the grounding location. The captain, who was operating the vessel, told investigators that he had fallen asleep about 30 minutes before the grounding and was awakened when the vessel ran up on the shore. After an unsuccessful attempt to refloat the vessel, the three crewmembers abandoned the *Day Island* and waded ashore with the help of local rescuers. None of the crewmembers were injured, and no environmental damage was reported. The vessel was intentionally destroyed during its removal from the beach.

Day Island **on Ventura Beach, California, after grounding. (Photo by US Coast Guard)**

The wooden-hulled *Day Island* was crewed by a captain, a second operator who assisted the captain in navigating and operating the vessel, and a deckhand.[1] According to the crew, the vessel was on a four- to five-day trip to catch shrimp off the California coast, west of the city of Santa Barbara. The crew intended to fish for about 10–12 hours each day, beginning about 0700 to 0800 each morning, and then sail to Ventura Harbor, about 30 miles south of Santa Barbara, to unload the catch.



Satellite image of the accident location. (Background by National Geographic MapMaker Interactive)

A day prior to the accident, on January 9, the three crewmembers boarded the *Day Island* in Long Beach, California, planning to depart for Santa Barbara about 1500. They were delayed, however, and left Long Beach about 1900. The captain, who typically arose about 0400 after going to sleep about 2200, estimated that he slept about six to seven hours the night before the departure.

The captain and the second operator had known each other for about a year while working together during the shrimp fishing season (October through May) and had made the trip from Santa

[1] During interviews, the first and second crewmembers on the vessel identified their positions, respectively, as "skipper" and "second skipper" (*skipper* is a colloquial term for captain). To avoid confusion, the crewmembers will be referred to as the "captain" and the "second operator" in this report.

Barbara to Ventura "many times," according to the second operator.[2] They initially agreed that the captain would operate the vessel from Long Beach to Santa Barbara. But before they left Long Beach, the captain told the second operator that he had a toothache and asked the second operator to operate the vessel to Santa Barbara instead so that he could rest. The captain would then operate the vessel on the approximately 2.5-hour trip from Santa Barbara to Ventura Harbor after finishing their fishing activities on January 10. The second operator agreed.

The captain got the vessel underway and operated it from Long Beach into the open ocean. From there, the second operator operated the vessel until its arrival off of Santa Barbara about 0700 to 0800 the next morning.

After the *Day Island* arrived off of Santa Barbara, the three crewmembers began fishing. The crew worked in cycles: deploying the net, retrieving it, unloading the catch, and then moving the vessel to a different area before beginning the cycle again. According to the second operator, they continued in this manner "on and off," occasionally taking breaks, until about 1800 to 1900 that night.

The captain told investigators that the toothache he experienced at the start of the trip had begun about four or five days before the voyage. As he explained to investigators, the pain was bearable before he set out from Long Beach, which is why he agreed to the trip and agreed to operate the vessel as captain. However, he said that his pain from the toothache increased after he assisted untangling the net cables during the day on January 10; he stated that this activity really "jacked up" his toothache pain. He tried to deal with it, but because of the intensity he took medication that a friend had provided him.

The captain told investigators that the medication relieved the pain and he felt "normal" afterwards, but he then experienced the type of type of fatigue that "everybody felt" when working on a fishing vessel. He didn't see a problem, therefore, taking a second dose of the medication four or five hours later.

The captain was unfamiliar with the medication he had taken. He said that the friend provided him with about 10 pills, of which he had taken two. The friend informed the captain that the pills had helped him deal with toothache pain. Because the vessel was destroyed after the accident with the pills still on it, NTSB investigators were unable to obtain the medication to identify it and determine its effects on performance. Investigators attempted to identify the pills from the captain's description of their appearance but were unable to do so.

After the day's fishing was completed, the captain operated the vessel using autopilot as it headed for Ventura Harbor. He told investigators that at some point he fell asleep and did not wake up until the vessel ran aground on Ventura Beach. He believed that he fell asleep about 30 minutes before the grounding.

The second operator, who was having tea on the lower deck at the time, was startled by the grounding and said that he heard a "big bang" when the vessel hit the shore. The deckhand was asleep in his bunk on the lower deck and immediately woke up. Both crewmembers left the lower

[2] Statements of the captain were made through a translator, a Coast Guard civilian, who translated questions to the captain from English to Vietnamese and his answers from Vietnamese to English during his interview with investigators. All questions and answers to and by the second operator, the deckhand, and the owner were in English, and their responses in quotes were made directly by them.

deck to inspect the vessel for damage and provide assistance to the captain. They saw that the vessel was intact and not taking on water.

Efforts to back the vessel off the beach were unsuccessful. When it was evident that the boat could not be moved, the captain decided to contact the US Coast Guard. Before he made the call, however, units from the Ventura City Fire Department and other first responders arrived at the vessel from the beach. Rescue personnel entered the water and assisted the crew while they exited the vessel. Prior to abandoning the *Day Island*, the captain told the crewmembers to don survival suits, which they did. Once they entered the water, rescue personnel threw lines to them and pulled them ashore.

After the rescue, the second operator asked the captain what happened. The captain told him that he had fallen asleep. He later told investigators that the second pain pill he took "put him to sleep."

The captain likely experienced chronic fatigue from several days of toothache pain that disrupted his sleep each night. Because the pain began several days before the accident, the captain presumably was chronically fatigued before the trip even began. Further, his account of the events of the accident suggest that he got little sleep on the voyage from Long Beach to Santa Barbara because of his toothache pain. The evidence also indicates that he exacerbated that fatigue by awakening early on January 10 and engaging in the physically demanding efforts involved in the fishing activities. Thus, after being seated for several hours in the vessel's wheelhouse—at night—with the autopilot steering the vessel, he would have easily fallen asleep, even without pain medication, given his lack of sleep and extended wakefulness just before he fell asleep.

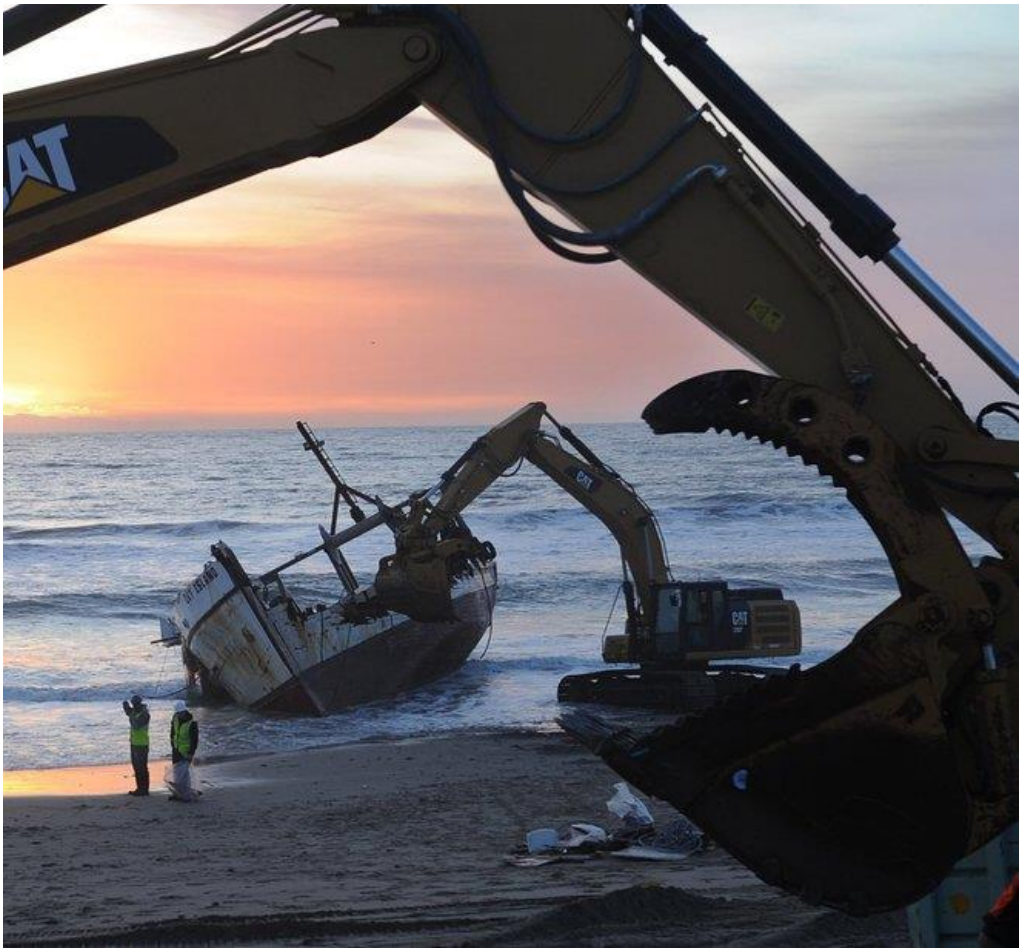
Additionally, if the medication that the captain took was a prescription analgesic, it likely would have had sedating qualities sufficient to cause him to sleep. By taking the second pill, the potentially sedating effects of the medication were magnified, further increasing the likelihood of his falling asleep.

The captain should not have operated the vessel because he was not fit for duty, either from lack of sleep alone or combined with the effects of a potentially impairing medication. The captain's acute fatigue caused him to fall asleep while operating the vessel, which led to the vessel running aground.

Because the *Day Island* grounded on a beach within a California State Park, state officials informed the vessel owner that he would be responsible for the cost of its removal. The owner, who had not insured the vessel, was unable to cover the cost. Consequently, the owner agreed to transfer ownership to the state, which then arranged for the vessel's removal. In order to reduce environmental damage from the vessel, it was dismantled and removed in pieces.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the grounding of the fishing vessel *Day Island* was the captain falling asleep while operating it due to the effects of his acute fatigue. Contributing to the grounding was the captain's use of medication that may have been sedating.



***Day Island* being dismantled on Ventura Beach. (Photo courtesy of *Ventura County Star*)**

Use of Medication While Operating Vessels

For the safety of the crew, equipment, and vessel, use of medication in conjunction with the operation of a vessel must be done with caution. Mariners are encouraged to consult with a medical professional before using any medication, whether prescribed or over the counter. For credentialed mariners, use of certain medications can be disqualifying (the captain on the *Day Island* was not required to be credentialed). See Coast Guard Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 04-08 for more information on medications impacting credentialing.

Mariners should never use medications with which they are unfamiliar or for which they are not the prescribed user. In many states, use of a prescription drug that is not prescribed to the user is illegal. (Investigators could not determine if the medication used by the *Day Island* captain was a prescription).

Effects of Fatigue

Fatigue is often a contributor to the cause of accidents investigated by the NTSB. Mariners should recognize the effects of sleep loss on performance and should never take a watch while too fatigued to be fit for duty. When so fatigued, mariners should arrange for a qualified watchstander to serve in their place or otherwise avoid being on duty when they are unable to safely carry out their responsibilities.

Vessel Particulars

Vessel	*Day Island*
Owner/operator	Sea Dragon Love Seafood Distributor, Inc.
Port of registry	San Pedro, California
Flag	United States
Type	Fishing vessel
Year built	1944
Official number (US)	246265
IMO Number	7613739
Construction	Wood
Length	73.2 ft (15.1 m)
Draft	9.8 ft (1.6 m)
Beam/width	22 ft (4.9 m)
Gross and/or ITC tonnage	107 gross tons
Engine power	Unknown
Propulsion	1 X Diesel
Persons on board	3

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Santa Barbara throughout this investigation.

For more details about this accident, visit www.ntsb.gov and search for NTSB accident ID DCA16FM016.

Adopted: November 15, 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 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." 49 *Code of Federal Regulations*, Section 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. 49 *United States Code*, Section 1154(b).