

MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Watertight Integrity on Uninspected Towing Vessels

Recently, an uninspected towing vessel, operating on the Lower Mississippi River, flooded, capsized and sank. This marine casualty resulted in the closure of the Lower Mississippi River. The river remained closed until the vessel was located and salvaged and the waterway was deemed safe for all commercial traffic.

The Coast Guard investigated this incident and determined the two primary causal factors: (1) compromised watertight integrity and (2) improperly stowed hazardous cargo onboard the towing vessel. The watertight doors to the engine room were left in the open position and the lazarette hatch cover was missing. Additionally, marine portable tanks, containing hazardous cargo on the forward deck of the vessel, were not properly secured.

When passed by another vessel with a large wake, water entered the towing vessel's engine room through the open watertight door, causing a port list. Due to this initial list, the improperly stowed cargo shifted on deck resulting in an increased list which ultimately capsized and sank the towing vessel.


Several Marine Safety Alerts (MSA) have been issued regarding watertight doors, including MSA 04-10, 12-08, 1-08 and 3-07. The COTP New Orleans highly recommends that vessels follow the recommendations made in the MSA's, listed above, in order to prevent future incidents and waterway closures.

For additional information, you may contact the following:

Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Command Center: (504) 365-2200

Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Prevention Department: (504) 365-2242

Coast Guard Sector New Orleans Towing Vessel Examination Branch: (504) 365-2262

  
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