

Safety Report

Noosa bar strikes again

Narrative

A 4.3m fibreglass runabout, with a 40hp outboard engine, attempted to cross the Noosa River bar about 0600 hrs. High water was at 0640 that day. The owner/master was newly licensed and one of his two passengers also held a RSML. The owner was at the helm and this was to be his first bar crossing as skipper.

The master waited in line for his turn to cross the bar, observing the track and progress of each preceding vessel. When his turn came the master accelerated and began the crossing. The first wave was negotiated without difficulty but the master was surprised by the size of the second wave, which pushed the vessel slightly sideways. Despite the seemingly innocuous impact of this wave, the vessel capsized, dumping all three men into the water. They clung to the boat as it drifted back in. The Volunteer Coast Guard then towed the vessel back to the boat ramp.

The owner reported this incident to Maritime Safety Queensland as he was required to do.

The owner purchased the vessel only one month prior to the incident, and had held his RSML for approximately two weeks. He had crossed the bar before as a passenger, but never as skipper. He did not use a GPS bar track, but relied on observations of other vessels to guide his negotiation of the bar.

The lessons

- 1. Crossings of river bars can be extremely hazardous, especially for the inexperienced.**
- 2. Care should be taken to discuss conditions with local coast guards, observe wave patterns before committing vessels to the crossing, and ensure that all appropriate safety gear is aboard and readily accessible.**
- 3. A Recreational Shipmasters Licence does not instantly provide the boating skills necessary for difficult operations such as crossing a known hazardous bar.**
- 4. Good masters always take into account their personal experience and limitations, in addition to meeting regulatory requirements.**

Safety Reports are prepared by the Investigations Unit, Executive Services and Compliance Branch, Maritime Safety Queensland. Safety reports are intended to draw the attention of the marine community to the lessons arising out of investigations into marine accidents. Consequently, the reports do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability.

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