

Vessel capsize during bar crossing

Narrative

A 5.2m fibreglass tri-hull runabout, with a 60hp outboard engine, attempted to cross the Noosa River bar about 1715 hrs. Low water was at 1737 that day. The owner/master was unlicensed, although one of his two passengers did hold a RSML. The owner was at the helm of the vessel at the time.

Whilst negotiating the bar, he placed the vessel on the back of a wave. The wave collapsed from under him, causing the bow of the vessel to dig into the sea bed. The following seas then swamped the vessel, subsequently causing it to capsize. All aboard made it to shore safely, although the vessel was a complete write-off.

The owner reported this incident to the Volunteer Coast Guard, but not to Maritime Safety Queensland as he was required to do.

The owner was experienced in bar crossings, but did not know that it was low water when he made his attempt at crossing the bar.

The lessons

- 1. Crossings of river bars can be extremely hazardous, regardless of experience. 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.**
- 2. A Recreational Shipmasters Licence is required for the operation of many recreational vessels in Queensland Waters; check with your local MSQ office whether you need one to operate your boat.**
- 3. All marine incidents must be reported to a Shipping Inspector or to Maritime Safety Queensland within 48 hours.**
- 4. The crossing was made at Low Water – check tide times when planning the voyage.**

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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