

Interim report on the investigation into the capsizing and sinking of the cement carrier **CEMFJORD** in the Pentland Firth, Scotland with the loss of all eight crew on 2 and 3 January 2015

The information contained in this interim report is based on investigations to date. Readers are cautioned that there is the possibility new evidence may become available that might alter the circumstances as depicted in this report.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

At 1300 on 30 December 2014, the Cyprus registered cement carrier *Cemfjord* sailed from Rordal, Denmark, bound for Runcorn, UK. The vessel had a crew of eight and was fully laden with 2084 tonnes of bulk cement. During the following 3 days the vessel encountered increasingly heavy seas as it made slow progress across the North Sea. *Cemfjord* was in the eastern approaches to the Pentland Firth when, at 1052 on 2 January 2015, the master called Shetland Coastguard on VHF radio and advised that the vessel was about to enter the Pentland Firth.

Cemfjord's automatic identification system (AIS) transmissions ceased at 1316 when the vessel was in the Pentland Firth Outer Sound; position 58° 43.2'N - 003° 09.0'W. The last received transmission indicated that the vessel was on a heading of 239°, and was making good a course over the ground of 276° at a speed of 6.3kts. Twenty-five hours later, the alarm was raised by a passing ferry when *Cemfjord*'s upturned hull was sighted 19 miles east of its last transmitted AIS position.

An extensive search followed but none of *Cemfjord*'s crew were found and they are all assumed to have perished. The vessel sank late in the evening on 3 January 2015.

INVESTIGATION

The MAIB investigation is being conducted in close co-operation with the Department of Merchant Shipping, Republic of Cyprus (Flag State) and the Polish State Commission on Maritime Accident Investigation. The investigation into the circumstances of the accident has focused on four key areas:

- Where and when *Cemfjord* capsized.
- How and why it capsized.
- Why a distress alert was not transmitted and the alarm was not raised until 25 hours after its AIS transmissions ceased; and
- Whether the crew had an opportunity to abandon ship.

The draft of the investigation's final report is now complete and it has been sent to key stakeholders for a 30 day period of consultation.

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

"The sole objective of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame."

As the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the accident date, this interim report is published, pursuant to Regulation 14(2)(b) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012.

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

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SHIP PARTICULARS

Vessel's name	<i>Cemfjord</i>
Flag	Republic of Cyprus
Classification society	Det Norske Veritas-Germanischer Lloyd
IMO number	8403569
Type	Cement carrier
Registered owner	Partenreederei Baltic Sun
Manager	Brise Bereederungs GmbH
Construction	Steel
Year of build	1984
Length overall	83.18m
Beam	11.34m
Gross tonnage	1850
Minimum safe manning	5

VOYAGE PARTICULARS

Port of departure	Rordal, Denmark
Intended port of arrival	Runcorn, UK
Type of voyage	Short international
Cargo information	2084t of white cement in bulk
Manning	8

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION

Date and time	2 January 2015 at 1316
Type of marine casualty	Very serious marine casualty
Location of incident	58° 43.2N - 003°09.0W
Fatalities	8
Damage/environmental impact	Vessel lost No significant pollution
Ship operation	On passage
Voyage segment	Mid-water
External & internal environment	Wind: westerly, 40kts, gusting 56kts Tidal stream: 290° at 6kts Daylight Visibility: moderate in rain showers Sea temperature: 8°C
Persons on board	8