

MC 2000627  
NOT. 7222A

(9)



## Original Wisconsin Ducks, Inc.®

1890 Wisconsin Dells Parkway  
Box 117, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965-0117  
Phone A.C. 608/254-8751

May 5, 2000

Jim Hall, Chairman  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Washington, D.C. 20594

Re: M-00-5

Dear Sir:

Wisconsin Ducks, Inc. predecessor – in – title, Melvin Flath, started the first amphibious duck operation in 1946 at Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. Their business was eventually sold to Wisconsin Ducks, Inc. after the 1955 season.

The safety of our passengers and our employees is the number one priority in the operation of Wisconsin Ducks. Our goal is that all passengers have a safe and enjoyable tour on land and water.

We have operated for over 54 years without a water-related accident. During this time, we have carried over 15 million passengers.

Owners of Wisconsin Ducks, who have been in the water passenger carrying business for over 75 years, along with the United States Coast Guard office in Milwaukee, set the standards which have allowed us to operate safely. While we are no longer under their jurisdiction, we still follow the guidelines set by the Coast Guard.

We feel the NTSB recommendation of reserve buoyancy for all DUKWS will cause great harm to our perfect safety record of over 54 years.

The recommendation for foam fails to consider that the DUKW is also a land vehicle. The hull of a duck contains a motor, transmission, transfer case, hydrovac, drive shafts, gas tank and tubing. We perform extensive daily and weekly work on these essential mechanical systems. Preventive maintenance and inspection of our vehicles will not be possible with a hull filled with foam.



FUN! ADVENTURE! ON LAND AND WATER!®

A watertight bulkhead is possible in the rear of the vehicle, however; a bulkhead located in the front leads to many problems. Namely, a motor, transmission, and transfer case which run from the front into the middle of the vehicle. We have not been able to find a way to continue our high level of maintenance with a bulkhead around any part of the motor or transmission.

The NTSB calculations are not applicable to Wisconsin Ducks. We operate with 21 passengers and a pilot. We seat all of our passengers in the cargo area. The aft freeboard on a fully loaded Wisconsin Duck is 17.5 inches.

Wisconsin Ducks also operates with a restrictor plate that has a 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch by 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch opening for the drive shaft. This opening leaves 1/8 inch of clearance for the shaft. Our electric bilge pump also acts as a backup to our higgins pump.

The United States Coast Guard has done an outstanding job in regulating our industry. The failure of one operator to perform routine maintenance properly should not tarnish the Coast Guard's job or Wisconsin Ducks' reputation.

Wisconsin Ducks is quite concerned about the NTSB's lack of expertise in the marine industry and its failure to attend the Coast Guard's meeting of industry leaders in Washington D.C.

It is unfortunate that the NTSB's dispute with the Coast Guard over inspection and investigation has led the agency to discredit 54 years of safe operating practices by Wisconsin Ducks and the United States Coast Guard.

Wisconsin Ducks will continue to improve and implement safety measures that will enable us to uphold our excellent safety record of over 54 years.

Sincerely,

WISCONSIN DUCKS, INC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Daniel J. Gavinski".

Daniel J. Gavinski  
General Manager

AUG 21 2000

Mr. Daniel J. Gavinski  
General Manager  
Original Wisconsin Ducks, Inc.  
1890 Wisconsin Dells Parkway  
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin 53965-8751

Dear Mr. Gavinski:

The National Transportation Safety Board has received your May 5, 2000, letter concerning Safety Recommendation M-00-5, stated below. This recommendation was issued by the Safety Board to Original Wisconsin Ducks, Inc. (Wisconsin Ducks) as a result of the Board's investigation of the May 1, 1999, sinking of the *Miss Majestic* near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

M-00-5

Without delay, alter your amphibious passenger vessels to provide reserve buoyancy through passive means, such as watertight compartmentalization, built-in flotation, or equivalent measures, so that they will remain afloat and upright in the event of flooding, even when carrying a full complement of passengers and crew.

The Safety Board is disappointed that Wisconsin Ducks has dismissed the value of reserve buoyancy on DUKWs. Safety Recommendation M-00-5 was issued because DUKWs, LARCs, and Alvis Stalwarts have no reserve buoyancy through watertight bulkheads, built-in flotation, or other equivalent means. An independent naval architect, hired by the Board, confirmed that installation of bulkheads or other means to provide reserve buoyancy was practical in the DUKWs. Without this reserve buoyancy, the amphibious vessels are subject to sinking and a tragedy like the one that occurred in Arkansas could be repeated. Accordingly, the Safety Board requests that the Wisconsin Ducks reconsider their position on this matter and consider taking the requested action. Pending further reply from the Wisconsin Ducks, Safety Recommendation M-00-5 has been classified "Open—Unacceptable Response."

In the interest of accuracy, your letter reflects perceptions of the experience level of our marine staff and Safety Board—U.S. Coast Guard relations that are not factual. Should Wisconsin Ducks wish to discuss these issues, my marine staff can be contacted at (202) 314-6450.

Sincerely,  
ORIGINAL SIGNED BY  
JIM HALL

Jim Hall  
Chairman

MBrown:SR10:drafted 5/18/00, revised post discussion w/SR10; clean-draft: 6/20/00sp  
Rev. clean-draft: 6/22/00sa; final: 8/15/00sp  
MC2000627, Notation 7222A, Log M-423; Rec. M-00-5  
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Proofread by: 8/15/00 BF

Routing Symbol	SR-10 SPEC.	6/22/00 SR EDITOR	SR-10 CHIEF	MS-x	MS-1	RE-1	RE-x	SR-2A	SR-1
Date	5/23/00	5/23/00	5/23/00		6-15-00	N/A	N/A		6-19-00
Initials	MB	BF	EDW		MB	N/A	N/A		JH

Routing Symbol	M-3	M-2	M-1	M-4	C
Date	7/3/00	7/7/00	7-31	8/11/00	8/10
Initials	MB	BF	Noted - JAH	MB	MB