



# National Transportation Safety Board

## Marine Accident Brief

### Capsizing and Sinking of the Fishing Vessel *Advantage*

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Accident no.	DCA12LM026
Accident type	Capsizing and sinking
Vessel	Fishing vessel <i>Advantage</i>
Location	Approx. 14 nautical miles southeast of Cape Barnabas, Kodiak Island, Alaska 56° 58.0' N, 152° 36.4' W
Date, time	August 31, 2012 0030 Alaska daylight time (coordinated universal time - 8 hours)
Damage	Vessel: \$1.3 million Cargo: \$40,800
Fatalities	1 crewmember died in hospital, 1 crewmember lost (presumed dead)
Environmental damage	About 3,453 gallons of diesel fuel lost with vessel
Weather and sea conditions	Light southwest winds, 3- to 4-foot seas, sea temperature 52°F
Waterway	Gulf of Alaska lies south of Alaska in the northeastern Pacific Ocean

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Fishing vessel *Advantage* operating in Prince William Sound, Alaska. (Photo © Charles Scott)

The uninspected fishing vessel *Advantage* was on a routine transit from Kodiak harbor, Alaska, to fishing grounds off the southern coast of Kodiak Island with a load of empty cod pots when it sank about 14 nautical miles southwest of Cape Barnabas at 0030 on August 31, 2012.

A Coast Guard rescue helicopter retrieved three of the four crewmembers. One was never found and was presumed dead, and the vessel's captain later died. About 3,453 gallons of diesel fuel were on board the vessel when it sank.

Nine days before the sinking, the *Advantage* was in Cordova, Alaska, to prepare for the opening of cod season on September 1. The crew transferred fuel between tanks on the *Advantage* and loaded fresh water for the transit to and work at the fishing grounds. The vessel then left Cordova for Kodiak to load cod pots. The crew made two round trips from Kodiak to set 33 cod pots per trip at the fishing grounds off Black Point at the southern end of Sitkalidak Island, just east of Kodiak Island, and returned to Kodiak harbor to load

## Capsizing and Sinking of the Fishing Vessel *Advantage*

lube oil products and diesel fuel. The *Advantage* then stopped at Alaska Pacific Seafoods to take on its third and last load of 33 cod pots. Two deckhands secured the cod pots on deck while the third deckhand stowed the stores and groceries for the trip.



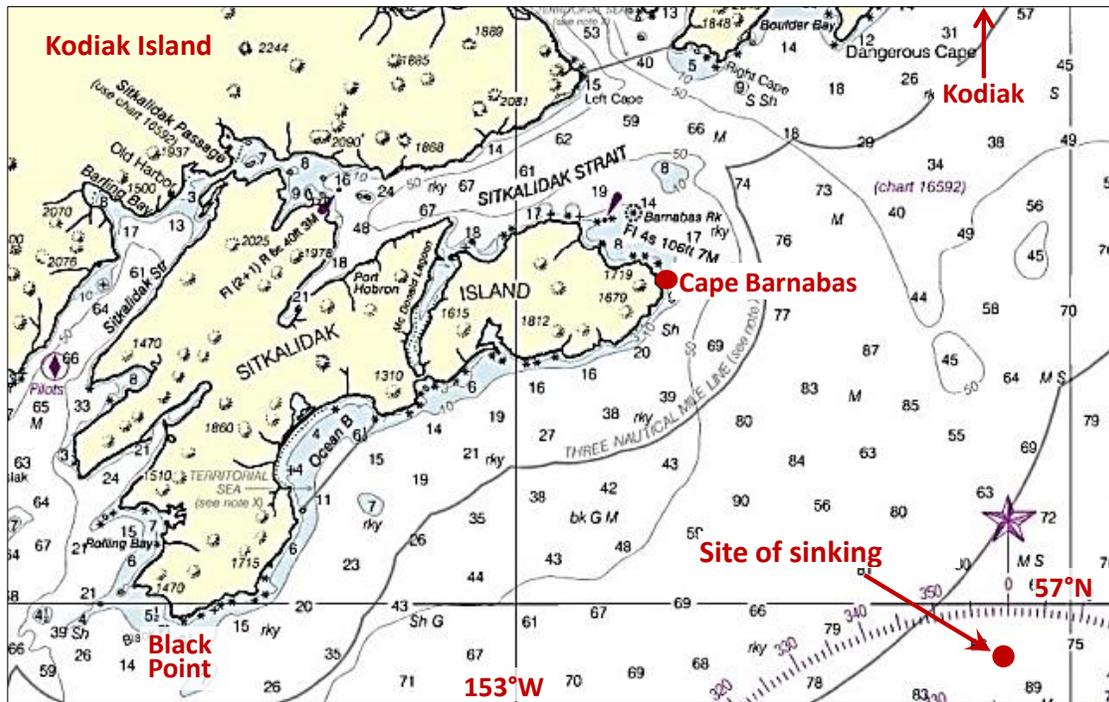
Location of the sinking of the fishing vessel *Advantage*, 14 nautical miles southeast of Kodiak Island, Alaska. (Background by Bing Maps)

The vessel departed Kodiak harbor about 1600 on August 30. Local weather at the time was light rain with breaks in the clouds, 4 to 5 miles visibility, with light southwest winds and 3- to 4-foot seas. The transit to the Black Point fishing grounds was about 100 nautical miles, expected to take 8 to 9 hours. Statements by a deckhand and the vessel's owner reported the departure was "normal." The owner of the *Advantage* also stated, "Other than the fuel and approximately 3,000 pounds of bait [and] 10 or so boxes of bait on deck, everything was the same as the previous two loads of pots put on the boat. She appeared to be riding normally with a load of pots."

The crew had dinner about 2000, and the captain took the wheel watch. One deckhand, who returned to his bunk after dinner, reported that he woke about 30 minutes later to low swells. He left the living spaces in the forecastle to check if anything on deck was shifting and later stated "nothing seemed suspect." He was on deck for 7 or 8 minutes and then returned to his bunk.

Another deckhand, who went to bed just after departure, stated he was woken by the vessel taking a sharp heel to port. He jumped out of his bunk, saw water on the deck as he ran from the forecastle aft to the galley, and then shouted to the other deckhands, "There's water coming in the door, grab your survival suit." In the dark forecastle with seawater pouring in, the crew did not have sufficient time to locate and don their survival suits.

## Capsizing and Sinking of the Fishing Vessel *Advantage*



Excerpt from NOAA chart 16580, indicating the location of the *Advantage* when it flooded, capsized, and sank off the coast of Sitkalidak Island. The vessel left Kodiak harbor to the north, en route to fishing grounds off Black Point.

The boat continued to heel to port as the first deckhand swam out of the galley. The second deckhand, who had been in an air pocket, had to dive down to reach the galley door and swim out and up to the surface. The two surviving deckhands reported that they did not see the third deckhand during that time.

The boat was now over 90 degrees, and the first deckhand was holding on to the mast when he saw the captain exit the portside window of the pilothouse. The first deckhand yelled to the second deckhand to grab the emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB), which was floating nearby. As the *Advantage* rolled further and capsized, the two deckhands and captain made their way to the overturned vessel's keel to hold on and climb up to get out of the cold water. The vessel sank about 15 minutes later. After about 5 minutes in the water, the crewmembers noticed the vessel's Zodiac inflatable dinghy come to the surface. They boarded the dinghy and began bailing it out with a 5-gallon oil bucket that had been floating nearby.

The EPIRB was water-activated. When Coast Guard personnel received the EPIRB signal they contacted the shoreside owner, who was unable to reach the *Advantage* by phone. The Coast Guard dispatched an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter to the scene, arriving 20 to 30 minutes after the crewmembers boarded the dinghy. The captain was hoisted to the helicopter first, followed by the two deckhands. A deckhand stated that exposure to the cold water appeared to affect the captain more than the others, and he died shortly after arriving at the hospital. The Jayhawk returned to the scene with a new Coast Guard crew to continue searching for the missing third deckhand. The Coast Guard search-and-rescue effort was suspended at 2040 on August 31.

The *Advantage* was not required to meet Coast Guard inspection regulations, but the owner voluntarily participated in the Coast Guard's commercial fishing vessel safety examination program. While the boat was in port on August 27, the owner requested that the Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment conduct a commercial fishing vessel dockside examination to the requirements of 46 *Code of Federal Regulations* part 28 and all district and

## Capsizing and Sinking of the Fishing Vessel *Advantage*

sector policies. The *Advantage* received five minor violations which did not prevent sailing: no light list, current tables, or Coast Pilot book on board; no proof of personnel first aid or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training; and worn retroreflective tape on a lifering needing replacement. Commercial fishing vessel safety exams deal primarily with lifesaving equipment on a vessel and do not include hull or machinery assessments that are required for Coast Guard–inspected vessels.

The surviving deckhands stated they were unsure why the *Advantage* heeled and lost stability. Leaking hatch covers are a potential cause of water ingress on fishing vessels; however, according to the owner’s written statement, the owner and crew checked the lazarette tank and hatch and the aft tank and hatch at the Kodiak fuel dock. Both appeared normal, and the hatches were closed and secured. The main fish hold hatch and aft hatch were replaced 2 months earlier, and the gaskets to both hatches were replaced 8 days before the accident voyage.

The *Advantage* was not required to carry a stability booklet, however a stability booklet was issued by the vessel designers and last updated in 1988. This book stated that the vessel could safely carry 24 crab pots. According to the vessel owner and the Alaska Pacific Seafoods operations manager, cod pots weighed about 500 pounds each versus 700 pounds for crab pots. On the accident voyage, the *Advantage* was carrying 33 cod pots, which weigh a total of about 16,500 pounds, similar to the weight of 24 crab pots (16,800 pounds), which suggests the captain and the owner made an effort to stay within the stability booklet’s guidelines. However, over the life of the vessel, many changes were made, and the stability booklet was never updated nor did the Coast Guard require that it be kept current.

Crew statements indicate the *Advantage* sank following an unexpected, large heel to port, which resulted in immediate downflooding into living spaces and rapid capsizing. Given that winds were light and seas moderate at 3 to 4 feet, a loss of vessel stability may have caused the initial severe heeling. After the *Advantage* sank, however, no postaccident stability analysis was performed.

## Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the capsizing and sinking of the fishing vessel *Advantage* was a severe heel to port, followed by immediate downflooding. The reason for the vessel’s loss of stability could not be determined.

## Capsizing and Sinking of the Fishing Vessel *Advantage*

### Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Advantage</i>
Owner/operator	Advantage Fisheries LLC Gig Harbor, WA
Flag state	United States
Official Number	639016
Builder, date	Peacock Boatbuilding Wilmington, CA 1981
Construction	Steel
Length overall	57.45 ft (17.50 m)
Breadth	20.71 ft (6.30 m)
Depth	9.33 ft (2.84 m)
Draft	9.00 ft (2.74 m)
Gross tonnage	73
Propulsion type	Diesel, single screw
Crew complement	4

For more details about this accident, visit <http://www.nts.gov/investigations/dms.html> and search for NTSB Accident ID DCA12LM026.

**Adopted: August 20, 2014**

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The NTSB has authority to investigate and establish the probable cause of any major marine casualty or any marine casualty involving both public and nonpublic vessels under 49 *United States Code* 1131. This report is based on factual information from the Coast Guard and NTSB investigation and analysis of the accident.

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