



National Transportation Safety Board

Marine Accident Brief

Collision of Offshore Supply Vessel *Gloria May* and Fishing Vessel *Capt Le*

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| Accident no. | DCA14LM017 |
| Vessel names | Offshore supply vessel <i>Gloria May</i> Fishing vessel <i>Capt Le</i> |
| Accident type | Collision and sinking |
| Location | Gulf of Mexico, 16 nautical miles south of Pascagoula, Mississippi 30°02.918 N, 088°31.15 W |
| Date, time | August 24, 2014 2240 central daylight time (coordinated universal time – 5) |
| Injuries | None |
| Damage | <i>Gloria May</i> : est. \$50,000 <i>Capt Le</i> : loss of vessel valued at \$175,000 |
| Environmental damage | Potential spill of about 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 200 gallons of lube oil on board the <i>Capt Le</i> ; salvage operations recovered 5,500 gallons of oil/water mixture. |
| Weather | Clear sky, visibility 10 nautical miles, air temperature 85°F, east-southeast wind 15–20 knots, current 1 knot from northeast |
| Waterway information | Gulf of Mexico |

The offshore supply vessel *Gloria May* collided with the uninspected fishing vessel *Capt Le* in the Gulf of Mexico about 2040 on the evening of August 24, 2014. As a result of the collision, the hull of the *Capt Le* was breached and the vessel flooded and sank; the bow of the *Gloria May* suffered minor damage. Three crewmembers from the *Capt Le* abandoned their sinking vessel into a liferaft and were recovered by the crew of the *Gloria May*. No injuries resulted from the accident. Total damage was estimated at \$225,000.



Fishing vessel *Capt Le* under way before the accident. (Photo by owner)

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The *Capt Le*, a 73.9-foot-long uninspected commercial fishing vessel, departed its home port, Bayou La Batre, Alabama, on the morning of the accident and traveled about 4 hours to its planned fishing area 16 nautical miles south of Pascagoula, Mississippi. On board were the captain, who was the vessel's owner, and two deckhands. After arriving at the fishing area around 1500, the captain shut down the propulsion engine and allowed the boat to drift while the crew rested before the evening's work.



Satellite image of the area in which the *Capt Le* and the *Gloria May* collided. (Background by Google Earth)

About 2000, after deploying the fishing gear from the boat's port and starboard outriggers, the captain began trawling for shrimp on an easterly course in the northern portion of a chartered fish haven. In addition to the two main fishing nets, a third, smaller net (termed a trynet) was deployed. The trynet was easier to recover than the main nets and was used to indicate the amount of catch that could be expected in the main nets. The captain's practice was to trawl on a steady course for about 30 minutes, then recover the trynet to see how much shrimp had been caught. If the trynet shrimp catch was less than about 5 pounds, he would redeploy the trynet and continue trawling on a reciprocal course and parallel track for another 30 minutes.

The captain used a software program on his personal computer to assist him with navigation and monitoring the vessel's track in the fishing area. At the first recovery of the trynet, the catch weight did not meet the captain's standard, so he reversed course and began trawling in a westerly direction. This routine of recovering the trynet after about 30 minutes and then reversing course was repeated several times during the evening until the time of the collision with the *Gloria May*.



Offshore supply vessel *Gloria May* in port after the collision.

The *Gloria May* was a 130-foot-long offshore supply vessel (OSV) under contract to Chevron Energy to provide logistical support to the 137-foot-long liftboat *Michael Eymard*, carrying cargo and supplies between the liftboat and its leased pier (MOVK Base) near Pascagoula. The *Michael Eymard* was elevated in position supporting maintenance work on an oil platform located near Mobile Block 992 (MO-992), about 20 miles south of Pascagoula.

The *Gloria May* departed MOVK Base, located on Bayou Casotte, about 0945 on the day of the accident. On board the vessel was a crew of five—a master, who stood the midnight-to-noon navigation watch along with a deckhand; a second captain, who stood the noon-to-midnight navigation watch with a second deckhand; and a training captain, who assisted the watch officers and stood watch from 0600 to 1800. The vessel's master was the navigation watch officer as the *Gloria May* traveled south with a load of cargo for the *Michael Eymard* and rendezvoused with the liftboat at Mobile Block 992 about 1215 in the afternoon. Shortly before reaching the liftboat, about 1200, a new watch team consisting of the second captain and a deckhand relieved the master's watch. The second captain, who was operating the *Gloria May* at the time of the accident, held a master's endorsement of steam or motor vessels of not more than 100 gross registered tons upon near coastal waters on a US Coast Guard-issued merchant mariner's credential. As the training captain's normal watch time overlapped both the master's and the second captain's watches, he remained on watch with the second captain until about 1800.

The *Gloria May* briefly entered the 500-meter safety zone around the *Michael Eymard* so the liftboat crew could determine the arrangement and extent of cargo on the back deck and then stood by outside the safety zone until about 1715. Using the OSV's dynamic position system, the second captain backed the *Gloria May* to a position alongside the *Michael Eymard* so the liftboat crew could transfer cargo from the *Gloria May* and backload cargo from the liftboat. Cargo operations continued until about 2200, after which the crew of the *Gloria May* secured the cargo on deck for the return voyage to MOVK Base.

After the deckhand on watch on board the *Gloria May* secured the backloaded cargo for sea, he went to the wheelhouse to inform the second captain that the deck was secure and to request permission to make rounds in the engine room and perform maintenance work directed by the master. The second captain approved his request, and the deckhand left the wheelhouse. About 2215, the second captain, now alone on the bridge, increased the vessel's speed to about

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12.5 knots and engaged the autopilot on a course of 357 degrees to the first GPS waypoint. He then checked the operation of all bridge systems, including the two radars and VHF radios, and found everything was functioning properly. At this time he did not detect any contacts ahead, either by radar or by sight. About 5 minutes later, the second captain moved from the front of the bridge to the chart table, which was on the starboard aft side of the control station, and began filling out paperwork required for the voyage back to the MOVK Base. The second captain was alone on the bridge and diverted his attention from his primary duty to maintain a proper lookout.



Wheelhouse of the *Gloria May*, looking from aft to forward at centerline. The operating station is at the forward area of the wheelhouse, and the chart table is at the starboard side.

After working on the paperwork for about 5 minutes, the second captain returned to the front of the bridge to verify everything was functioning correctly and to perform a visual and radar search for contacts. About this time, the deckhand/engineer, who had just inspected the machinery spaces, arrived back on the bridge to obtain an electrical connector to complete a wiring repair in the engine room. After locating the needed item, he requested permission to return to the engine room to continue working on the master's repair list. The second captain approved his request and the deckhand left the bridge.

During his visual scan for contacts, the second captain observed bright deck lights from a nearby fishing vessel, which was off his starboard bow at a range of about 2 nautical miles. He also detected the vessel on radar; the port radar was set to the 6 nautical mile range, and the starboard radar was set to the 0.5 nautical mile range. The way the deck lights appeared to him, he believed the fishing vessel was headed away from him and did not pose a threat of collision. He did not use the radar to plot the contact's position or to determine the risk of collision. The second captain had no formal radar operation training, nor was he required by Coast Guard regulations to have such training. The second captain was aware that shrimp vessels normally trawled in one direction and then reversed course repeatedly as they worked their way back and forth across the fishing grounds. Soon after evaluating the movement of the fishing vessel, the second captain on the *Gloria May* returned to the chart table to continue work on the safety forms.

About 2215, the captain of the *Capt Le* completed an easterly track and went to the back deck to recover the trynet and to check the catch for shrimp. As the trynet catch was still inadequate, the captain redeployed the trynet with the assistance of a deckhand and returned to the bridge to turn the boat to starboard and resume a westerly course. He did not see the approaching *Gloria May* either by radar or visually.

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During this time, the second captain on the *Gloria May* stated he noticed bright lights shining into the bridge from the forward direction, and as he looked up from his paperwork he saw that a collision with another vessel was imminent. He was running to the operating station at the forward part of the bridge to take control of the steering and throttle when the bow of the *Gloria May* collided with the port side of the *Capt Le* about 2240 at a speed of about 11.5 knots.

The force of the collision knocked the captain of the *Capt Le* out of his chair but he was not injured, nor were the other two crewmembers on the fishing vessel. The captain made a distress call to the Coast Guard and checked his vessel for damage. About 10 minutes later, the captain discovered the engine room and the fish hold were flooding, and he believed the vessel would likely sink soon. After cutting free wire ropes from their fishing gear that had become entangled with the mooring bit on the OSV's bow, the captain and crew gathered their belongings and abandoned the sinking fishing vessel into their liferaft about 2305.

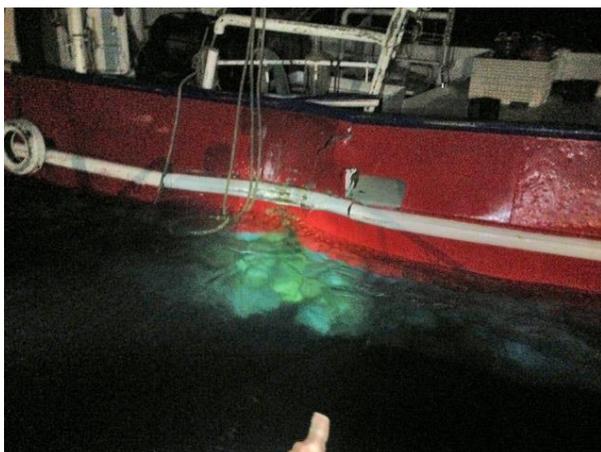
The crew of the *Gloria May* responded to the collision by checking their vessel for damage and verifying that the crew aboard the *Capt Le* had not been injured. The captain of the *Gloria May* also notified the Coast Guard and company officials of the collision shortly after the accident. The crew removed fishing gear from the *Capt Le* that became entangled with the OSV. About 2325, the crew of the *Gloria May* brought aboard the crew of the *Capt Le* from their liferaft and stood by the sinking fishing vessel until the Coast Guard arrived.

Coast Guard Sector Mobile received VHF radio notification of the collision from the *Gloria May* at 2240 and soon after requested that Coast Guard Station Pascagoula launch a boat to respond to the collision. A 45-foot medium response boat from Station Pascagoula got under way at 2302 and arrived on scene about 2355. The Coast Guard responders found the *Capt Le* was still afloat but listing to its starboard side with damage to the port side of its hull. The Coast Guard took the *Capt Le* crewmembers aboard their boat and transported them to Station Pascagoula, arriving there about 0130. Later that night, the fishing vessel sank in about 70 feet of water with its bow down and its stern projecting about 2 feet above the sea surface.

Coast Guard overflights of the area the following morning, August 25, identified an oil sheen about 2 nautical miles long by 1 nautical mile wide.

Postaccident toxicological test results of the *Capt Le* captain, the *Gloria May* second captain, and *Gloria May* deckhand were negative for drugs and alcohol.

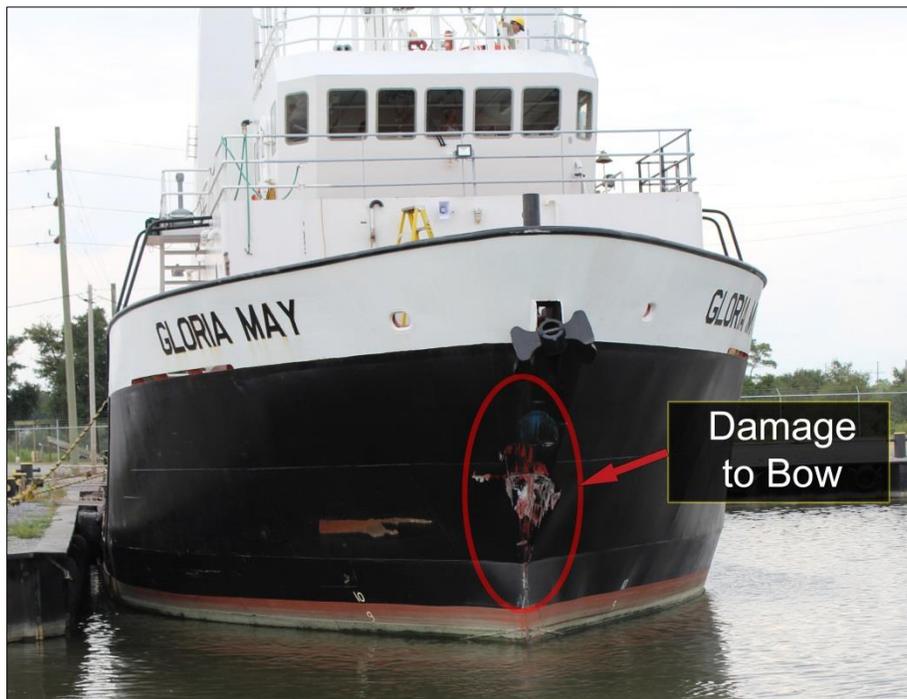
As a result of the collision, the port side of the *Capt Le*'s hull in the area of the bulkhead between the engine room and the fish hold was split open over a length of about 10 feet starting from 3 feet below the gunwale and extending downward toward the vessel's keel. The width of the split in the hull was about 2 to 3 feet, and the hull in the area of the split was inset about 1.5 feet.



Damage to port side of *Capt Le* (left) and the *Capt Le* after the collision with stern protruding above the sea (right). (Photos by Coast Guard)

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Damage to the *Gloria May* consisted of denting and scraping of the bow on either side of the stem above the waterline where the bow contacted the port side of the *Capt Le*. Additional damage was found to the hand rails at the walkway forward of the wheelhouse, the aft mast atop the aft end of the wheelhouse, a communication antenna and a radar antenna on the top of the wheelhouse, and other areas that apparently contacted the fishing vessel's port outrigger.



Scraping and denting damage to the bow of the *Gloria May*.

The accident investigation included a review of the *Gloria May* safety management system manual, which required the watch officer to complete three safety forms before the start of each voyage: the voyage plan, the pre-underway checklist, and the cargo load calculation. However, the safety forms should have been completed before departing on the return voyage to port, and the second captain should not have diverted his attention from his navigation duties to complete the forms while under way. According to the master's standing orders, the watch officer was to "maintain a proper lookout and radio watch at all times" and his "primary duties are watchkeeping and navigation. Secondary duties are communications [and] record keeping and may also include other duties. Secondary duties should under no circumstances interfere with the exercise of primary duties." The second captain, who held a Coast Guard master's endorsement on his Coast Guard credential, was also required by the navigation rules to maintain a proper lookout and to use all available means to determine if risk of collision exists. The second captain, in addition to having the ability to detect the brightly lit fishing vessel by sight, had two functioning radars and VHF radios available to assist him in assessing the prevailing conditions before the collision. Finally, because the *Capt Le* was engaged in fishing operations, according to navigation rules the *Gloria May* was burdened to keep out of the way of the fishing vessel.

The captain of the *Capt Le*, although not credentialed nor required to be by Coast Guard regulations, was bound to comply with the navigation rules as well. Although his night vision was severely degraded by the bright deck lights on his own vessel and his ability to maneuver was restricted by his deployed fishing nets, he should have maintained a proper lookout using all available means, including visual, radar, and radio communications. The captain should not have assumed that other vessels in the area would see him and divert their courses, and he should not have diverted his attention from his primary duty to safely navigate his vessel, particularly in an area of the sea with known vessel traffic.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the collision between the offshore supply vessel *Gloria May* and the fishing vessel *Capt Le* was the failure of both vessels' operators to maintain a proper lookout.

Vessel Particulars

| Vessel | <i>Gloria May</i> | <i>Capt Le</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Owner/operator | Gulf Resource Management, Inc. | Privately owned and operated |
| Port of registry | Galliano, LA | Irvington, AL |
| Flag | United States | United States |
| Type | Offshore supply vessel | Commercial fishing vessel, shrimp trawler |
| Year built | 2005 | 1980 |
| Official number (US) | 1172752 | 999124 |
| IMO number | 8998112 | 8034382 |
| Construction | Steel | Steel |
| Length | 130.6 ft (39.8 m) | 73.9 ft (22.5 m) |
| Draft | 9.3 ft (2.8 m) | 8.0 ft (2.4 m) |
| Breadth | 36.0 ft (11 m) | 21.8 ft (6.6 m) |
| Gross tonnage | 88 | 134 |
| Engine power, manufacturer | 1,750 hp (1,305 kW) Caterpillar 3508B | 450 hp (336 kW) Caterpillar 3412 T |
| Persons on board | 5 | 3 |

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from US Coast Guard Sector Mobile throughout this investigation.

For more details about this accident, visit www.nts.gov and search for NTSB accident ID DCA14LM017.

Adopted: August 10, 2015

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 either gathered by NTSB investigators or provided by the Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for a marine casualty; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “[NTSB] investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties . . . and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person.” 49 *Code of Federal Regulations*, Section 831.4.

Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by conducting investigations and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. 49 *United States Code*, Section 1154(b).