



# National Transportation Safety Board

## Marine Accident Brief

### Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015

---

<b>Accident no.</b>	DCA16PM005
<b>Vessel names</b>	<i>Kiska</i> and <i>Kolina</i>
<b>Accident type</b>	Tow evolving into search-and-rescue/person-in-the-water mission
<b>Location</b>	26 nautical miles south of Maui, Hawaii, 20°08'35.0"N, 156°20'05.8"W
<b>Date</b>	November 5, 2015
<b>Time</b>	About 2305 Hawaii-Aleutian standard time (coordinated universal time – 10 hours)
<b>Injuries</b>	One fatality
<b>Property damage</b>	Total loss of the <i>Kolina</i> , estimated at \$25,000
<b>Environmental damage</b>	None reported
<b>Weather</b>	Scattered showers, east-northeast winds gusting up to 34 knots, seas at 8–10 ft, water temperature 81°F, air temperature 82°F
<b>Waterway information</b>	Alenuihaha Channel separates the islands of Hawaii and Maui, is 26 miles wide at its narrowest point, and about 6,800 feet deep

---

On November 5, 2015, about 2305, the crew aboard the 110-foot-long US Coast Guard cutter *Kiska* lost radio contact with the captain of the 30-foot-long recreational vessel *Kolina*. At the time, the cutter was towing the recreational vessel in the Alenuihaha Channel, about 26 nautical miles (nm) south of Maui, Hawaii, after the *Kolina* captain had requested aid due to a broken tiller. The Coast Guard began a search-and-rescue/person-in-the-water mission to locate the captain. At 0917 on November 6, the captain was found in the water underneath the *Kolina*, entangled in the mast rigging and unresponsive. The *Kolina* sank about 10 hours after the body was retrieved.



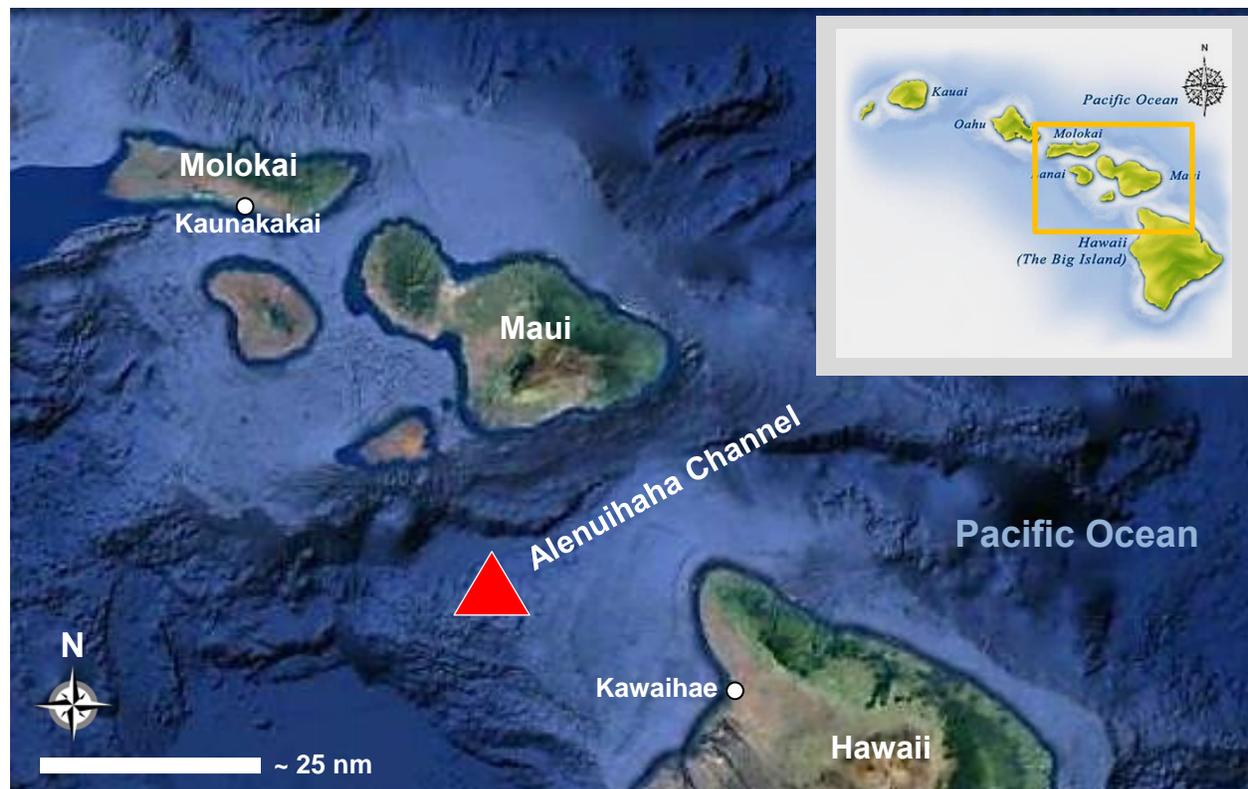
Coast Guard cutter *Kiska*. (Photo by Coast Guard)

## Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015

### Accident Events

On November 5, 2015, about 1551 Hawaii-Aleutian standard time, the captain of the 30-foot-long recreational vessel *Kolina* radioed Coast Guard Station Maui via very-high frequency (VHF) radio channel 16 that he was adrift in the Alenuihaha Channel between the islands of Hawaii and Maui. He said the vessel's tiller had snapped and he had only a mizzenmast with a trysail.<sup>1</sup> The winds were increasing during the afternoon; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Data Buoy Center recorded east-northeast winds with gusts up to 30 knots and 8–10-foot seas.

The 71-year-old captain told the Coast Guard that he was “not in deep distress, but inconvenienced and a bit concerned” because of the weather conditions and the snapped tiller. He requested that the Coast Guard tow his vessel across the channel and inform his wife on Molokai Island, Hawaii, that he would be delayed (Kaunakakai Harbor on Molokai was his ultimate intended destination). The captain said he had originally been at anchor near Kawaihae Harbor (on the northwest coast of Hawaii Island) while awaiting the arrival of a package, and that he then intended to travel north up the coast and await a weather window to cross the Alenuihaha Channel. However, at an undetermined time on November 3, the *Kolina* began dragging anchor outside Kawaihae Harbor and subsequently drifted out into the channel, where the captain had been for about 2 days. He estimated his position to be about 20 nm south of Maui and said that his boat was drifting beam to the seas.



Satellite image with the accident site overlaid by a red triangle. (Background by Google Earth)

The Alenuihaha Channel, located between the islands of Maui and Hawaii, is 26 nm across at its narrowest point. It is bordered on the Maui side by the 10,000-foot-high volcano Haleakala

<sup>1</sup> The *Kolina* was originally designed to have a dual-mast configuration with a forward main mast and a smaller mizzenmast positioned aft of the main mast. A *trysail* is a small triangular sail hoisted in place of a larger sail when winds are very high. Trysails usually provide enough thrust to keep the bow to the wind.

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

and on the Hawaii side by the nearly 14,000-foot-high volcano Mauna Kea. The channel is considered treacherous because of strong winds and rough waters; northeast trade winds funnel through the channel, creating wind gusts with up to five times more velocity than in the surrounding areas. In fact, the channel's name in Hawaiian means "great billows smashing." Local mariners say that forecasted conditions frequently under-represent actual wind and sea conditions in the Alenuihaha Channel.

Coast Guard Sector Honolulu Command Center (SCC) classified the *Kolina* captain's radio call as a distress incident and coordinated with its search-and-rescue mission coordinator to provide a tow. The *Kolina* captain told Coast Guard personnel that he would "probably be all right overnight if no one can get here soon. I am floating well, riding well, it's just not comfortable and I am not comfortable with working the forward deck."

A Coast Guard MH-65 Dolphin helicopter was instructed to locate the *Kolina* from a single line of bearing received from the Haleakala Remote Fixed Facility tower on Maui. The *Kolina* captain told the Coast Guard that he had activated two emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs); however, the helicopter crew received only the embedded 121.5-MHz frequency when they were within 1 mile of the *Kolina*.<sup>2</sup> At 1827, the helicopter crew located the *Kolina* about 26 nm south of Maui by a combination of radio direction-finding equipment and the *Kolina* captain setting off two red aerial flares. SCC diverted the underway Coast Guard cutter *Kiska*, a 110-foot-long Island-Class patrol boat, to render assistance. The helicopter provided a vector for the *Kiska*; however, the helicopter had to depart the location to refuel on Maui. It returned in advance of the *Kiska*'s arrival to help route the cutter to the *Kolina*'s location.

At 2100, the helicopter relocated the *Kolina* about 28 nm west of Kawaihae Harbor, drifting on a track of 250 degrees true at a speed of 0.63 knots. The helicopter served as a communication relay between the *Kiska* and the *Kolina* until the cutter was close enough to the vessel to receive its VHF radio signal.<sup>3</sup> The *Kolina* captain reiterated twice that he wished to remain aboard the *Kolina* to monitor a portable dewatering pump, as the vessel was taking on water.<sup>4</sup>

The *Kiska* commanding officer conducted an operational risk management assessment using the Green, Amber, Red (GAR) model in accordance with Coast Guard policy to identify and evaluate as a team the risks and hazards associated with the towing operation and how to manage them.<sup>5</sup> Because of the prevailing adverse weather conditions in the area, the environment risk element of the GAR model placed the total risk value at 33 out of 60. According to Coast Guard Commandant Instruction 3500.3, a value of 24–44 (amber zone) indicates moderate risk.

---

<sup>2</sup> The two EPIRBs on board were older-model and had been either lent or given to the captain; they were not registered to either the vessel or the captain.

<sup>3</sup> At 2229, the helicopter once again had to leave to refuel.

<sup>4</sup> The inflow of seawater from leaks in the hull drained the *Kolina*'s only available means of electricity: two 12-volt marine deep-cycle batteries to power the bilge pump and the VHF radio. No backup power was available to operate the VHF radio; therefore, to conserve the *Kolina*'s battery power, the SCC limited the contact with the *Kolina* captain to a communications check every 30 minutes until the *Kiska* arrived. The captain had reportedly departed Kawaihae Harbor before the arrival of a new cell phone battery and charger.

<sup>5</sup> Under the GAR risk assessment model, participants rate aspects of an operation based on specified categories (that is, supervision, planning, team selection, fitness, environment, event complexity, and, in some instances, equipment). Each category is rated from 1 to 10, with 10 being most hazardous; the scores are then added. If the total risk falls in the green zone, risk is considered low. If the total risk falls in the amber zone, risk is moderate, and procedures should be implemented to minimize risk. If the total risk reaches the red zone, risk is high, and measures should be initiated to reduce risk before starting the operation.

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

Because of the weather conditions, the *Kiska* crew determined that the cutter's small boat would not be launched, and that the tow would have to be established directly from the cutter to the *Kolina*. At 2118, the commanding officer established a towing watch in anticipation of the tow. Per the cutter's Watch, Quarter & Station Bill, each crewmember was assigned a task or activities to be carried out during the operation. The photograph below depicts *Kiska* crewmembers demonstrating their towing bill positions and responsibilities to investigators after the accident.



***Kiska* crewmembers postaccident, demonstrating their towing bill positions and responsibilities to investigators in Hilo, Hawaii.**

The *Kiska* arrived on scene at 2123 and approached the *Kolina* on its starboard side. The *Kolina* had only one small white light, rigged about one-third up the mizzenmast. The light was barely visible to the *Kiska* crew during the initial approach. They therefore requested that the *Kolina* captain keep one of his three onboard flashlights illuminated to distinguish the *Kolina*'s location as the *Kiska* made its final approach. The *Kiska* crew passed a handheld ultra-high frequency (UHF) radio in a waterproof case to the *Kolina* captain via a heaving line to establish more reliable on-scene communication between the two vessels. They also directed the captain to recover his anchor line, which was trailing from the *Kolina*'s bow. The captain, who was reportedly tethered to the mizzenmast, struggled for about 45 minutes to retrieve the anchor line in the gusty weather conditions.<sup>6</sup>

The *Kiska* crew shackled a bridle to the towline and passed the equipment via the heaving line to the *Kolina* captain. Because of the darkness and the 10-foot seas, the *Kiska* crew could not fully assess the *Kolina*'s construction and condition. The crew initially faked out (or prepared on deck) about 400 feet of towline; the captain radioed that he would attach the towline to the keel-stepped mizzenmast (located about 6.5 feet aft of the bow), as he said that was the strongest point on the vessel to which to attach the line. However, the jury-rigged mizzenmast was smaller in diameter than the main mast for which the stepped-in collar was originally fitted, and the

---

<sup>6</sup> The *Kolina* was not equipped with lifelines at the time of the accident (lifeline stanchions for the vessel were left behind and discovered at Kawaihae Boat Park). An inflatable dinghy was tied off to the *Kolina*'s port side and not used in the accident.

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

mizzenmast was not supported to compensate for this size disparity; nothing was preventing the mizzenmast from moving laterally inside the collar. Furthermore, the mizzenmast was inadequately equipped with only polypropylene line instead of customary wire-rope standing rigging. In addition, the bridle should have been secured to several strong points over the length of the vessel; however, because of the *Kolina*'s lack of deck fittings, forward cleats, and a bullnose chock at the bow, the captain attached the bridle only to the unsupported mizzenmast base. The bridle, if properly secured, also would have reduced yawing (or twisting/oscillation) of the *Kolina* during the tow; however, because the bridle was attached only to the single focal point of the mizzenmast, yawing was not as controlled.

About 2242, the tow was established at a distance of 325 feet between the two vessels, and both vessels got under way about 2250. Due to the darkness, rough sea state, and length of the towline, the *Kiska* crew did not have visual sight of the *Kolina* or the captain.<sup>7</sup> The *Kiska* proceeded at speeds averaging about 5.5 knots in accordance with Coast Guard safe-speed calculations; the highest speed during the tow was 7.6 knots at 2257.<sup>8</sup>

Sometime between 2258 and 2305, the *Kiska* crew, who had communicated continually with the *Kolina* captain, lost radio contact with him. They then shortened the towline to about 100 feet to try to gain visibility of the *Kolina* and the captain. The *Kiska* crew then noted that the *Kolina*'s mizzenmast had snapped and was floating in the water, and they could not see the captain nor could they re-establish contact with him.<sup>9</sup> The *Kiska* crew alerted SCC and continued to shorten the towline; eventually, at 2331, they cut the line to prevent the *Kiska*'s propellers from being fouled in the *Kolina*'s mast lines and rigging, which were awash around the vessel in the 10-foot seas. The *Kiska* crew tried unsuccessfully to locate the captain, and SCC directed the helicopter back to the scene. The helicopter crew conducted a brief trackline search, deployed a rescue swimmer to confirm that the captain was not on board the *Kolina*, hoisted the rescue swimmer back on board the helicopter, and, together with the *Kiska* crew, conducted additional search patterns.<sup>10</sup>

SCC deployed additional search assets the following morning, November 6, including an additional helicopter (this one from Air Station Barbers Point) and a C-130H Hercules aircraft. A response boat-medium (RB-M) from Coast Guard Station Maui and the cutter *Galveston Island* also participated. At 0917, the Maui RB-M crew found the captain in the water underneath the *Kolina*, entangled in the mast rigging and unresponsive. The captain was not wearing a lifejacket.<sup>11</sup> He was about 15 feet below the surface and close to the broken end of the mast. His left ankle was

---

<sup>7</sup> Dark nighttime conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The moon phase was waning crescent with 28 percent of the moon's visible disk illuminated; however, at the time of the towing, both the sun and the moon were more than 15 degrees below the horizon and provided no illumination.

<sup>8</sup> The speed information was acquired from the Coast Guard's Shipboard Command and Control System. Because of how the *Kiska*'s engineering drive shaft was designed, the *Kiska* clutches in at 9 knots during single-engine operation and can only regulate speeds below 9 knots by actively engaging and disengaging the engine. The crew did so during the tow to comply with safe-speed calculations in Commandant Instruction (COMDTINST) M16114.5, which are in part based on the towed vessel's waterline length and incorporate a 10-percent safety factor. According to those calculations, the safe towing speed for the *Kolina* was 6.6 knots and the maximum towing speed was 7.34 knots. For more detail, see COMDTINST M16114.5, chapter 17, D.36, "Towing at a Safe Speed."

<sup>9</sup> The mizzenmast had snapped near its base, unable to withstand the point-loading that the captain configured for the tow.

<sup>10</sup> It was too dangerous to deploy the rescue swimmer for a longer period of time in the darkness and with the mast rigging tossed around in the 10-foot seas.

<sup>11</sup> In preparation for the tow, the Coast Guard reportedly asked the *Kolina* captain if he had lifejackets aboard, which he did, but there is no record of the Coast Guard instructing him to don one.

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

entangled in a black line connected to a small cleat on a piece of wood that appeared to have broken off from the *Kolina*. To free the captain's body, the crew aboard the *Kiska*'s small boat cut the line around his ankle and then brought him over to the *Kiska*. The *Kiska* subsequently transported the captain's body to local authorities at Kawaihae Harbor.

No *Kiska* crewmembers reported sustaining any injuries during the tow and search.



***Kolina* on the morning after the accident. Not visible in this photo is the broken mizzenmast and rigging in the water off the starboard bow. (Photo by Coast Guard)**

The Maui RB-M crew determined that the response boat could not tow the *Kolina* due to the prevailing conditions and returned to Station Maui. SCC directed a C-130 aircraft to deploy a self-locating datum marker buoy in the vicinity of the *Kolina* so that the vessel's position could be tracked. The C-130 aircraft also conducted overflights to monitor the *Kolina* while awaiting additional surface support to tow the vessel. Shortly after 1900, about 10 hours after the captain's body was found, the *Kolina* was swamped by the large rolling seas and sank about 37 nm south of Maui at coordinates 19°58.64'N, 156°25.39'W. The recorded depth at that location is 10,200 feet.

According to his next of kin, the *Kolina* captain was an experienced mariner, having sailed various recreational vessels in Hawaiian waters and to and from the mainland United States for more than 35 years. He had reportedly sailed across the Alenuihaha Channel on five previous occasions aboard other vessels. The *Kolina* was the third vessel that he had owned. The next of kin told investigators that the captain could not swim.

Toxicological testing was conducted on the *Kiska* crew and Sector Honolulu watchstanders in accordance with Coast Guard policy. All results were negative. The *Kolina* captain's toxicology results identified ethanol (0.018 gm/dL, which may have been from postmortem production) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive component of marijuana (5.4 ng/ml, which is below the measurable cutoff of drug tests in most jurisdictions). Investigators could not decisively conclude that effects of THC and alcohol (if the ethanol in fact resulted from alcohol consumption) contributed to the accident; however, the captain's behavior and decision-making on the night of

## Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015

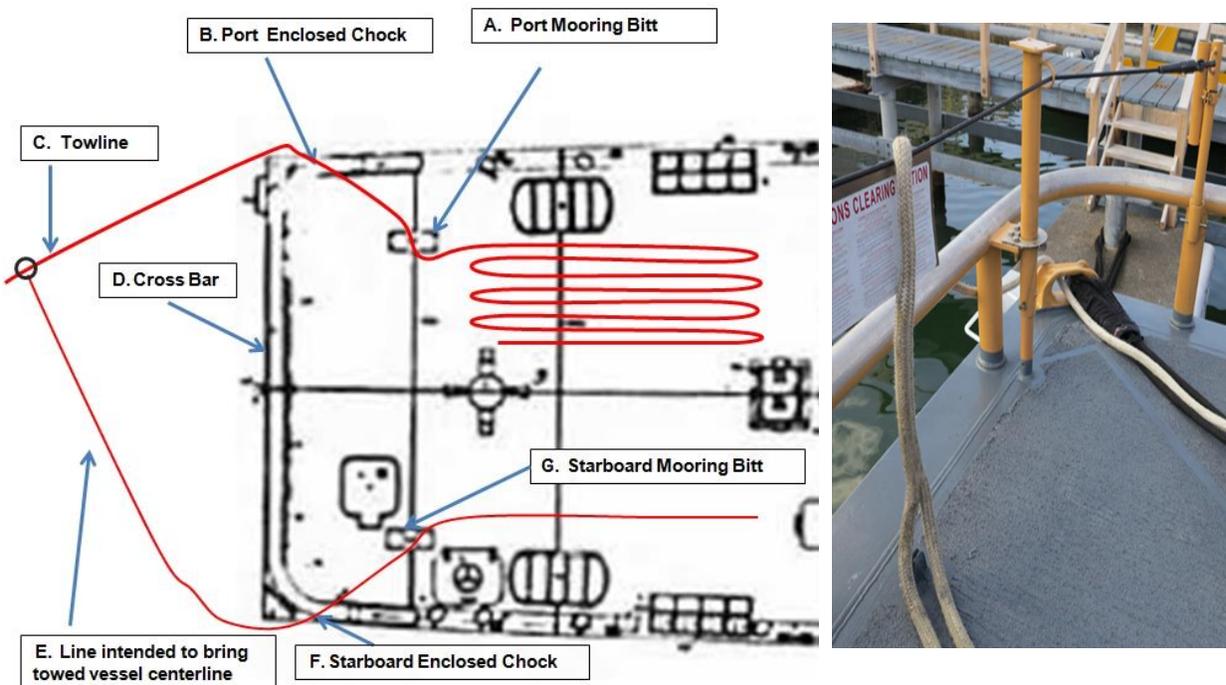
the accident was consistent with reports of his usual behavior and decision-making in the preceding days and weeks. An autopsy was conducted and the results indicated that the captain suffered a fatal head injury (a subarachnoid hemorrhage), which occurred on board the vessel before he went into the water.

### Vessel Information

#### *Kiska*

Coast Guard cutter *Kiska*, a 110-foot-long Island-Class patrol boat with a beam of 21 feet and a draft of 7 feet, was commissioned in 1990 and homeported in Hilo, Hawaii. The vessel was commanded by a lieutenant and had a regular complement of two additional officers (the executive officer was on leave at the time of the accident), one senior enlisted chief engineer, and 17 enlisted service members.

The standard towing configuration for the cutter was not used during the tow because, on October 27 when the *Kiska* was moored in Hilo, the starboard horn of the tow bitt sheared during heavy surging. While en route to the *Kolina*, crewmembers noted that the *Kiska*'s aft starboard bitt, typically used for mooring lines, had a small surface crack. Although the *Kiska* crew did not believe the crack to be structural, the damaged towing bitt required the crew to use an alternative configuration to mitigate risk. Because the *Kolina* was a relatively small and lightweight vessel, the *Kiska* crew concluded that using a towing bitt was unnecessary and that the towline could be attached to the *Kiska*'s aft portside mooring bitts. Accordingly, the crew ran the towline off the port side through an enclosed chock (see next image).



Left, image of *Kiska*'s towing configuration, depicted by a Coast Guard party representative. Right, photo of a section of *Kiska*'s stern, where the tow was configured.

A second line was rigged off the starboard mooring bitts and chock. This line was to be attached to the towline via shackle and then brought in as needed to keep the tow on the *Kiska*'s centerline. The crew lost contact with the *Kolina* captain before the second line could be

## Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015

configured. Investigators found no evidence that the Coast Guard's towing configuration played a role in the accident.

### *Kolina*

Records indicate that the *Kolina* was built in 1952 as a Herreshoff H-28-design, auxiliary sailing vessel of all-wood construction. Its length overall was 30 feet with a ketch, or dual-mast, assembly. However, at the time of the accident, the vessel had only a mizzenmast and trysail (in place of the main mast) located about 6.5 feet aft of the bow, and, according to witnesses familiar with the *Kolina*'s condition before the accident, was more of a rowing vessel than a sailing vessel. Investigators were told that the means of propulsion included the trysail, 14-foot-long sweeps (oars) with oar locks fastened to the cockpit, and an 18-foot-long laminated yuloh sculling oar that the captain had crafted himself. The yuloh is a traditional tiller-like apparatus that provides propulsion through a rowing motion. The *Kolina* was outfitted with a rudder attached to the aft edge of the keel with affixed cables that ran externally to the hull and were fastened to the tiller. The vessel had ground tackle and an anchor. Its beam was 9 feet 6 inches, with a draft of 4 feet 2 inches.

### Background

Because of the sinking, investigators could not conduct a postaccident vessel survey or inspection of the *Kolina*. As a result, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) reviewed events involving the *Kolina* in Kawaihae before the accident, including potential maintenance on the vessel, to determine whether they had any relevance in the accident.

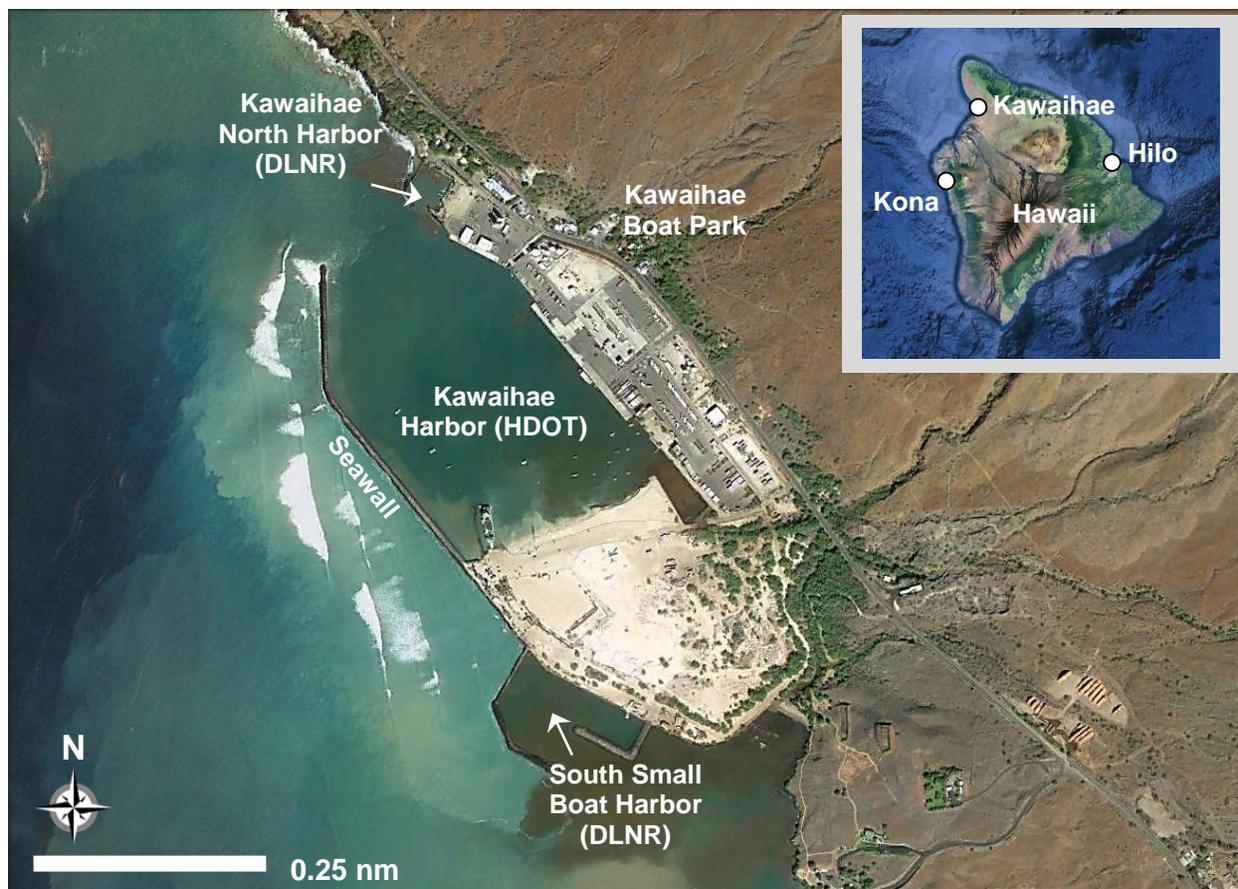
For 17 years before the sinking, the *Kolina* was in dry storage at several locations. The captain acquired the vessel in 2008. During its last 3 years, the *Kolina* was located at Kawaihae Boat Park, uncovered and in a degraded state. The storage facility property manager finally told the captain that the *Kolina*'s dry storage lease would not be renewed due to the vessel's immobility, size, and poor condition. The property manager and the captain agreed that the *Kolina* would be removed from Kawaihae Boat Park by September 30, 2015.

On September 30, the captain had Apana Crane Service trailer the *Kolina* a short distance to the nearby Kawaihae Harbor (operated by the Hawaii Department of Transportation [HDOT]) to place the vessel in the water there. Because Kawaihae Harbor is commercial and not for recreational vessels, an HDOT harbor security officer denied the *Kolina* entry and referred the captain to the harbor agent at the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR). The DLNR DOBOR harbor agent was not contacted by the captain or the crane company. However, an HDOT contractor at Kawaihae Harbor allowed the captain and Apana Crane Service to enter the adjacent gated and unstaffed South Small Boat Harbor (operated by the state of Hawaii DLNR for recreational vessels).<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> The main office for the gated and unstaffed South Small Boat Harbor was located 35 miles to the south, near Kona, Hawaii.

Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015



Satellite image of Kawaihae, Hawaii, including the boat park, the main commercial harbor, the South Small Boat Harbor, and the recreational Kawaihae North Harbor. (Background by Google Earth)

At the South Small Boat Harbor, Apana Crane Service made several attempts to place the *Kolina* in the water. However, seawater was entering through the *Kolina*'s wooden hull planking, and the leaks did not subside even after the wooden planks swelled in the water. Because the flooding exceeded the *Kolina*'s bilge pump discharge capacity, the crane operator finally placed the vessel on the harbor's revetment wall.



Photo of *Kolina* on the revetment wall at South Small Boat Harbor, Kawaihae, Hawaii. (Photo by DLNR)

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

During the next approximately 4 weeks, DOBOR agents interacted with the *Kolina* captain several times. They initially contacted him on October 1, the day after the *Kolina* was placed on the revetment wall at South Small Boat Harbor, after they discovered the *Kolina* on the property without authorization. DOBOR agents informed the captain that the vessel would be impounded if not removed immediately, and they began charging dry-storage fees.<sup>13</sup> During DOBOR agents' discussions with the captain, he told them of his desire to cross the Alenuihaha Channel on his way to Molokai to sell the *Kolina* there. The agents later expressed amazement to investigators that the captain would consider attempting such a voyage in a vessel as degraded as the *Kolina*. The DOBOR agents extended the impoundment deadline several times, effectively affording the captain time to complete repairs to the vessel.<sup>14</sup>

Eventually, a field supervisor from the DLNR's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) hand-delivered a "Final Notice to Vacate and Notice of Intent to Impound" to the *Kolina* captain.<sup>15</sup> However, on October 14, impoundment proceedings were again postponed after confirmation from a second crane company, Isemoto Contracting, that the captain had scheduled the company to float the *Kolina* the following week. During the *Kolina*'s time on the revetment wall, the captain lived aboard the vessel, ostensibly to protect his personal property. He also attempted, with some success, to reseal the hull with roofing sealant, toilet bowl wax, and wooden bungs (tapered soft wooden plugs).

On October 19, Isemoto Contracting successfully launched the *Kolina* after two attempts. The captain subsequently moored the *Kolina* at the loading dock, which DOBOR agents informed him that he was not allowed to do. However, the *Kolina* remained moored without a permit at the South Small Boat Harbor's loading dock for several days. The captain was cited for living aboard the vessel without permission (per Hawaii administrative rule 13-231-21) and was also informed that the vessel's registration had expired.<sup>16</sup> On October 23, the captain filed for temporary mooring and dry-storage permits. A DLNR official told investigators that temporary mooring permits are good for slips at the state-owned small boat harbor and for offshore mooring, and that permits must not exceed a cumulative period of 120 days in the same calendar year per vessel (rule 13-231-4). The *Kolina* could thus have stayed at a slip at South Small Boat Harbor for 120 days in 2015 (until the end of the year) and then another 120 days in the 2016 calendar year. However, it was unclear if the captain understood this or if he thought that the temporary mooring permit was good for only 72 hours. In fact, on October 26, the captain attempted to row (or scull) the *Kolina* from the cockpit out of the South Small Boat Harbor along the seawall to the north side of the harbor.

---

<sup>13</sup> Per Hawaii administrative rule 13-231-10, impoundment can proceed 72 hours after notification. DOBOR charged dry-storage fees (per rule 13-231-17) for the *Kolina* for October 1–18; on October 28, DOBOR received confirmation that the captain's spouse in Molokai had finally paid the fees.

<sup>14</sup> There are no indications that the captain would have qualified for any potential extensions available under Hawaii administrative rules, such as rule 13-231-19, or Safety of Life at Sea/Safe Haven provisions.

<sup>15</sup> DOCARE agents did not conduct a safety boarding of the *Kolina* although they were authorized to do so (to verify vessel documentation and overall safety, including personal flotation devices, distress signals, navigation lights, fire extinguishers, ventilation, etc., in accordance with Hawaii administrative rules, Title 13).

<sup>16</sup> The *Kolina*'s registration expired in August 2014. However, because the vessel was, at this stage, more of a rowboat than a sailing vessel, Hawaii registration regulations did not require the *Kolina* to be registered.

Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015



*Kolina* at South Small Boat Harbor, Kawaihae, Hawaii. (Photo by DLNR)

The vessel had difficulty crossing the entrance to Kawaihae Harbor and began drifting toward the seawall. It eventually drifted up against a tugboat, the *Tiger Six*, which was moored in Kawaihae Harbor. At the request of an HDOT harbor security officer, Good Samaritan vessel *Po'okela* towed the *Kolina* to an anchorage just north of the harbor entrance. A manager from the *Po'okela*'s operating company later told investigators about the *Kolina*'s poor condition, stating in part, "the deck was a mess. There was line, tools, screws and equipment all over the deck, the vessel was in no condition to be in the water, let alone go outside the harbor." After completing the tow to the anchorage, the *Po'okela* crew relayed similar observations to the HDOT harbor security officer. They also noted the *Kolina*'s lack of forward cleats, the use of nylon stays (instead of more commonly used wire), the placement of the mizzenmast, and the short anchor rode and scope.<sup>17</sup> The *Po'okela* crew noted that the mizzenmast was loosely tied off with nylon lines leading forward and aft, and there was no boom for the sail and mast. Before departing the anchorage, the *Po'okela* crew supplied the captain with snacks and water and made sure that the *Kolina*'s anchor was set.

The captain's last interaction with DOCARE occurred on October 29 about 1150. DOCARE responded to a complaint from a residential subdivision located just north of the harbor about the *Kolina* anchoring in its fishing koa.<sup>18</sup> The responding DOCARE agent informed the *Kolina* captain via cell phone that the area had a 72-hour anchoring restriction, and the captain agreed to relocate before the time expired.<sup>19</sup> It is not known exactly when the *Kolina* left the koa or precisely where the captain next took the vessel until it, as he told the Coast Guard, started dragging anchor on November 3. Further, no evidence indicates that DOCARE, DOBOR, or

---

<sup>17</sup> *Scope* is a ratio of the length of an anchor rode from the bitt to the anchor shackle and the depth of the water under the bow of the boat measured from deck height.

<sup>18</sup> Fishing koas are located along the coastline and are known and respected by local Hawaiian fishermen.

<sup>19</sup> Hawaii administrative rule 13-235-9 allows recreational and commercial fishing vessels without a DLNR permit to anchor or moor outside of a state-designated offshore mooring area for a maximum of 72 hours, so long as anchoring or mooring in that area is not expressly prohibited.

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

HDOT officials notified the Coast Guard of the captain's intended voyage across the Alenuihaha Channel and the potential need for assistance, nor is it clear what measures the Coast Guard could have taken before the emergency developed.

An HDOT security official told investigators that, regarding conveying the *Kolina* to Molokai, the vessel could have been loaded onto an inter-island barge for transport to Kaunakakai Harbor and that this option would ultimately have been less expensive than what was spent on the two crane companies trying to launch the *Kolina*. Although the captain could have removed the *Kolina* from the water or sought other commercial alternatives to get the vessel to Molokai, he chose an unsafe option, likely due to financial constraints.

**Probable Cause**

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident involving Coast Guard cutter *Kiska* and recreational vessel *Kolina*, with the death of the *Kolina* captain, was the *Kolina* captain's decision to launch and operate a poorly maintained vessel and his failure to protect his personal safety during the subsequent tow in the Alenuihaha Channel.

**BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

**CHRISTOPHER A. HART**  
Chairman

**ROBERT L. SUMWALT**  
Member

**T. BELLA DINH-ZARR**  
Vice Chairman

**EARL F. WEENER**  
Member

**Adopted: October 3, 2016**

**Towing by Coast Guard Cutter *Kiska* of Recreational Vessel *Kolina*, Resulting in Loss of Life, Alenuihaha Channel South of Maui, Hawaii, November 5, 2015**

**Vessel Information**

<b>Vessels</b>	<b><i>Kiska</i></b>	<b><i>Kolina</i></b>
<b>Owner/operator</b>	US Coast Guard	Private citizen
<b>Port of registry</b>	Hilo, Hawaii	Kaunakakai, Hawaii
<b>Flag</b>	United States	United States
<b>Type</b>	Coast Guard cutter	Ketch-rig Herreshoff H-28 design
<b>Year built</b>	1990	1952
<b>Official number (US)</b>	WPB-1336	HA2184D (state of Hawaii number)
<b>Construction</b>	Welded steel	Wood
<b>Length</b>	110 ft (33 m)	30 ft (9.1 m)
<b>Draft</b>	6.1 ft (1.8 m)	4.2 ft (1.3 m)
<b>Beam/width</b>	21.1 ft (6.3 m)	9.6 ft (3.29 m)
<b>Tonnage</b>	155 long tons	Unknown
<b>Engine power; manufacturer</b>	6,000 hp (4,474 kW); diesel; (2) Paxman Valenta @ 3,000 hp each	N/A
<b>Persons on board</b>	20	1

For more details about this accident, visit [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov) and search for NTSB accident ID DCA16PM005.

**NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from Coast Guard Sector Honolulu, District Fourteen and Marine Safety Team Kailua-Kona Hawaii throughout this investigation.**

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 Title 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.” Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations*, 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. Title 49 *United States Code*, 1154(b).