



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

March 10, 2026

MIR-26-07

## Grounding of Fishing Vessel *Eileen Rita*

On April 11, 2025, at 0731 local time, the commercial fishing vessel *Eileen Rita* was transiting Massachusetts Bay when the vessel ran aground on Green Island, about 8 miles east of Boston, Massachusetts (see figure 1 and figure 2).<sup>1</sup> The three crewmembers on board were rescued by local first responders. No injuries were reported. A diesel sheen was visible in the water after the grounding. The vessel later sank with an estimated 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel on board and was a constructive total loss valued at \$720,000.



**Figure 1.** *Eileen Rita* underway in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 2020. (Source: Steven Kennedy, marinetraffic.com)

<sup>1</sup> (a) In this report, all times are eastern daylight time, and all miles are nautical miles (1.15 statute miles). (b) Visit [ntsb.gov](https://www.ntsb.gov) to find additional information in the [public docket](#) for this NTSB investigation (case no. DCA25FM031).

---

**Casualty Summary**

---

<b>NTSB casualty category</b>	Grounding/Stranding
<b>Location</b>	Green Island, 8 miles east of Boston, Massachusetts 42°21.1' N, 070°53.49' W
<b>Date</b>	April 11, 2025
<b>Time</b>	0731 eastern daylight time (coordinated universal time -4 hrs)
<b>Persons on board</b>	3
<b>Injuries</b>	None
<b>Property damage</b>	\$720,000
<b>Environmental damage</b>	Oil sheen observed; est. 4,000 gal diesel fuel on board
<b>Weather</b>	Visibility 2 mi, overcast, winds east 8 kts, seas <1 ft, air temperature 37°F, water temperature 42°F
<b>Waterway information</b>	Bay/entrance to harbor; current <1 kt

---



**Figure 2.** Area where the *Eileen Rita* grounding occurred, as indicated by a circled X. (Background source: Google Maps)

## 1 Factual Information

On April 10, 2025, at 2200, the 86-foot-long, steel-hulled commercial fishing vessel *Eileen Rita* got underway from Boston Harbor in Boston, Massachusetts, with three crewmembers, en route to the fishing grounds at Stellwagen Bank off the coast to dredge for scallops. About 2.5 hours later, at 0030 on April 11, the *Eileen Rita* arrived at the grounds. Each trip during the season, the crew was permitted to harvest 200 pounds of scallops. The crew typically remained at the fishing grounds until reaching the 200-pound limit before transiting back to Boston to unload the catch. After arriving at the fishing grounds, the crew of the *Eileen Rita* fished until about 0500, and the captain told investigators that they fished longer than usual because they “weren’t catching as much.” Shortly afterward, the *Eileen Rita* and crew departed the fishing grounds and transited back toward Boston Harbor, a trip of about 30 miles, which the captain expected to take about 3 hours.

For the transit back to Boston, the captain engaged the autopilot, which kept the vessel on a set heading.<sup>2</sup> The captain was the only crewmember who navigated the *Eileen Rita*, and during the transit, the two deckhands were asleep. At 0630, when the *Eileen Rita* was about 17 miles east of Boston, one of the deckhands woke up and brought the captain a coffee in the wheelhouse. The deckhand departed the wheelhouse and went back to sleep as the vessel continued the transit to Boston.

At 0700, when the *Eileen Rita* was about 4 miles from the Graves Lighthouse and about 12 miles from Boston, the captain noticed his selected course on the autopilot was too close to the lighthouse. He adjusted the heading “15-20 degrees to port,” which he noted was “too much.” He told investigators that he intended to adjust the heading back to starboard as the vessel got closer, but after adjusting the autopilot, he “sat down and feel asleep.” The *Eileen Rita* was not outfitted with a watch alarm, nor was it required to be.<sup>3</sup>

At 0731, the *Eileen Rita* grounded on Green Island about 8 miles east of Boston. The grounding woke up the captain. The captain went below to wake up the

---

<sup>2</sup> The marine autopilot system on board the *Eileen Rita* was designed to hold the vessel’s heading, which was set by the operator. It did not have the capability to automatically steer a course, nor did it account for set or drift.

<sup>3</sup> A *watch alarm* system is an automatic system that monitors wheelhouse activity to detect operator disability or absence. Systems vary in complexity, but a simple watch alarm requires the navigation watchstander to reset the alarm at preset time intervals to prevent the watchstander from falling asleep. If the watchstander does not reset the alarm, visual and then audible alarms activate in the wheelhouse. Additionally, the alarm may be configured such that if the alarm is not reset by the watchstander within a longer time period, it would alarm in other vessel spaces (e.g. captain’s stateroom or crew lounge) to alert off-watch personnel.

two deckhands and then put the engines in neutral before backing the *Eileen Rita* away from the rocks. Shortly afterward, the captain went to the engine room, where he observed water ingressing through a hole in the hull, and the vessel began to list to port. The captain retrieved the emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) and survival suits in preparation to abandon the vessel. The captain attempted to “tie off” the vessel’s liferaft, stored on the port side. However, it was not accessible because the vessel was “already going sideways” on the rocks (the inflated liferaft was later recovered by the US Coast Guard).

At 0746, all crewmembers had their survival suits donned, and the captain made a mayday call on VHF channel 16 to the US Coast Guard. The captain did not hear the response from the Coast Guard, so he activated the EPIRB. With the port list increasing, the three crewmembers climbed onto the starboard side of the hull (no crewmembers entered the water).

At 0758, the captain received a call from the Coast Guard on his cell phone (after not receiving a radio response from the captain, the Coast Guard contacted the operating company of the *Eileen Rita*, who provided the captain’s cell phone number). The captain notified the Coast Guard that the vessel had grounded and was taking on water, and the Coast Guard launched response assets to the scene. Additional vessels from the Boston Police Harbor Patrol and Boston Pilots also responded to the scene.

At 0827, a Boston Police Harbor Patrol boat recovered the *Eileen Rita* crew, who were still standing on the starboard side of the fishing vessel’s hull. The crewmembers were brought back to Boston, arriving at 0848, where they were evaluated by emergency medical service personnel upon arrival. None of the crewmembers sustained injuries.

In the hours after the grounding, a Coast Guard helicopter crew observed a diesel sheen coming from the *Eileen Rita*. Responding vessels from the Coast Guard and a salvage company also reported observing a diesel sheen coming from the *Eileen Rita* (see figure 3).

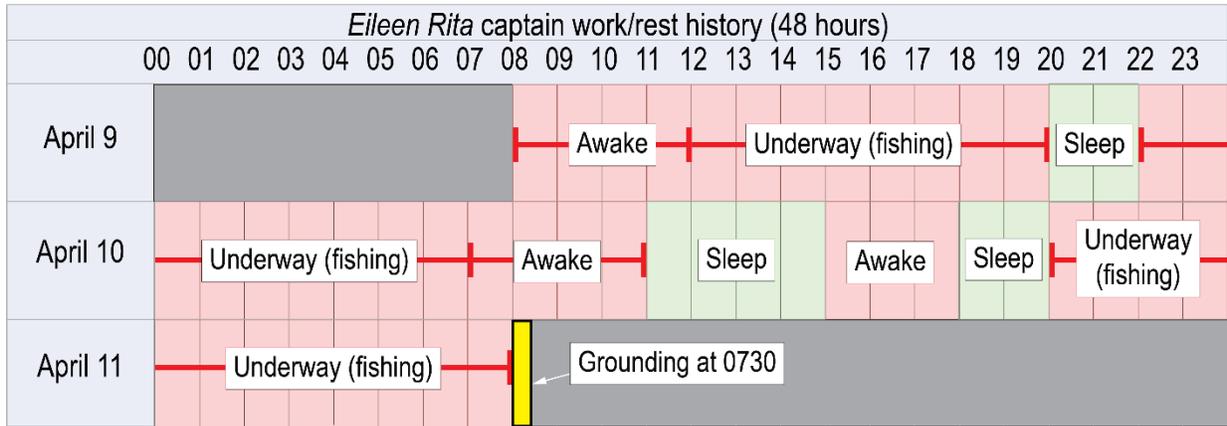


**Figure 3.** *Eileen Rita* and diesel sheen observed by Coast Guard overflight the morning of the grounding near Green Island, Massachusetts. (Source: Coast Guard)

In the days after the grounding, the *Eileen Rita* came off the rocks and eventually sank. At the time of the grounding, the *Eileen Rita* had an estimated 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 50 gallons of lube oil on board. The *Eileen Rita* was later salvaged but was deemed a constructive total loss valued at \$720,000.

After the grounding, the captain submitted samples for the testing of alcohol and other drugs; the results were negative.

In the 48 hours before the grounding, between April 9 and April 11, the captain reported making three separate fishing trips on the *Eileen Rita*, totaling 29 hours of fishing. During this time, the captain reported getting a total of 8 hours of sleep, which were broken up into two 2-hour segments and one 4-hour segment, each occurring at different times (see figure 4). After the grounding, the captain told investigators, "I didn't realize how tired I was ... until it was too late." The captain estimated that he had fallen asleep about 10 minutes before the grounding.



**Figure 4.** *Eileen Rita* captain's work/rest history for 48 hours before the grounding.

---

## 2 Analysis

While transiting Massachusetts Bay, the *Eileen Rita* grounded on Green Island, about 8 miles east of Boston, Massachusetts, after the captain fell asleep while alone in the wheelhouse navigating the vessel on autopilot.

The captain estimated that he had fallen asleep about 10 minutes before the grounding. In the 48 hours before the grounding, the captain accumulated a significant sleep debt, only getting a total of about 8 hours of sleep. Individuals typically require 7-8 hours of sleep every 24 hours to avoid the negative performance impacts of fatigue. Fatigue is the human body's desire for sleep and impacts all aspects of human performance. Even a deficit of as little as 2 hours can result in decreased attention, slower reaction time, reduced vigilance, and an inability to stay awake. Further, it is likely that the quality of sleep that the captain did receive was poor. The 8 hours of sleep that the captain reported were broken up, or fragmented, into one 4-hour and two 2-hour segments. Sleep is most restorative when individuals receive the maximum amount of uninterrupted sleep, typically occurring around the same time each day. The more sleep is fragmented, the more the restorative quality of sleep is diminished. As such, the captain was affected by fatigue the morning of the grounding due to an accumulated sleep debt and poor sleep quality in the previous 48 hours, causing him to fall asleep at the helm.

The *Eileen Rita* was not equipped with a watch alarm, nor was it required to be. While not a substitute for a well-rested operator, a watch alarm can help ensure that navigation crewmembers remain awake and vigilant while on watch, especially when operating alone in the wheelhouse. Systems vary in complexity, but a simple bridge watch alarm requires the navigation personnel to reset the alarm at preset time intervals. If it is not reset, visual and audible alarms sound in the wheelhouse. Additionally, the alarm may be configured such that if the alarm is not reset by the watchstander in the wheelhouse within a longer time period, the alarm would activate in other vessel spaces (for example, the captain's stateroom or crew accommodation spaces). The fatigued captain was navigating alone in the wheelhouse while the other crewmembers slept. Once the captain fell asleep, no other means were available to alert and wake the captain or any other crewmember before the grounding. Had a watch alarm been installed and set to appropriate intervals, it may have awoken the captain before the grounding.

## 3 Conclusions

### 3.1 Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the grounding of the fishing vessel *Eileen Rita* was the captain falling asleep while navigating the vessel due to fatigue resulting from an accumulated sleep debt and poor sleep quality in the preceding 48 hours.

## Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Eileen Rita</i>
NTSB vessel group	Fishing (Fishing vessel)
Owner/operator	Bill and Eileen LLC (Commercial)
Flag	United States
Port of registry	New Bedford, Massachusetts
Year built	1990
Official number	971262 (US)
IMO number	8856091
Classification society	N/A
Length (overall)	86.1 ft (26.2 m)
Breadth (max.)	24.3 ft (7.4 m)
Draft (casualty)	12.0 ft (3.7 m)
Tonnage	152 GRT
Engine power; manufacturer	850 hp (634 kW); Caterpillar D398 diesel engine

NTSB investigators worked closely with our counterparts from **Coast Guard Sector Boston** throughout this investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable cause of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for any accident or event investigated by the agency. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident 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* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents 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* section 1154(b)).

For more detailed background information on this report, visit the [NTSB Case Analysis and Reporting Online \(CAROL\) website](#) and search for NTSB accident ID DCA25FM031. Recent publications are available in their entirety on the [NTSB website](#). Other information about available publications also may be obtained from the website or by contacting—

National Transportation Safety Board  
 Records Management Division, CIO-40  
 490 L’Enfant Plaza, SW  
 Washington, DC 20594  
 (800) 877-6799 or (202) 314-6551