

Coast Guard Injured Man Aboard Ship Off Cape Fear

The U.S. Coast Guard Oak Island Station reported two search and rescue operations in nearby waters Saturday, according to BMCS J.D. Arndt, officer in charge.

At about 2:45 p.m., authorities at Coast Guard Group Fort Macon received a radio call from the ship "Meeraa," with a report of an injured crewman on board. The man had fallen down a ladder while the vessel was approximately 60 miles southeast of the Cape Fear River.

A Coast Guard helicopter was dispatched from the air station in Elizabeth City with an emergency medical technician on board to assist. The EMT and equipment was lowered from the helicopter to the ship's deck at about 7 p.m.

Because of the patient's condition, it was determined that he could not be safely hoisted onto the helicopter. Instead, the captain of the Meeraa decided to navigate into the Cape Fear River and transfer the patient to a waiting ambulance at the Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal.

However the ship did not have the appropriate charts to navigate the river. So the helicopter lowered the necessary navigational materials to the Meeraa's crew.

The ship docked at Sunny Point and the injured crewman was taken to New Hanover Regional Medical Center by a Southport Rescue Squad ambulance.

At about 6 p.m., someone who had been walking along Caswell Beach contacted the Oak Island station and reported seeing a boat capsized about 200 yards off shore.

The station launched its 21-foot rigid-hull inflatable fast response boat to the reported position and found an overturned 14-foot boat with no survivors in the water. The Coast Guard crew looked under the boat, but found no one trapped beneath it.

It was later determined that the boat had flipped earlier in the day and the occupants had made it to shore safely.

Sirens To Test At Low Volume

People living in the 10-mile area around Carolina Power & Light's Brunswick nuclear plant may hear sirens on April 6, 7 and 8.

Because CP&L tests the sirens individually, there is no specific time when residents should expect to hear them.

CP&L will test each siren at low volume. This will sound like a "growl" and will last only a few seconds. Residents may not hear the sirens unless they are very close to a siren when it is tested. These tests are not intended to check volume but to make sure each siren works. CP&L conducts a silent test every

two weeks and conducts the "growl" tests every three months. It conducts a full-volume test once each year. The rotating sirens are mounted on tall poles at 34 locations within 10 miles of the plant.

The sounding of the sirens does not mean the public should evacuate. In an emergency, the sirens would alert the public to listen to radio and television for information and instructions from the Emergency Broadcast System.

Questions about the tests may be directed to county or state emergency management offices, to CP&L's Brunswick Visitors Center or any CP&L business office.



STAFF PHOTOS BY LYNN CARLSON

Dockside Fun

Lunchtime revelers gather at Saturday's annual Day at the Docks sponsored by the Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association. Above, residents and visitors enjoy tasty treats, view local artwork and learn about safe boating at Holden Beach Marina. At left, volunteers serve fish plates to benefit Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department. Those attending enjoyed boat rides from dock to dock, as festival events also took place at Capt'n Pete's and Independent Seafood docks.



Leaking Shrimp Boat Removed From Intracoastal Waterway Last Week

BY DOUG RUTTER

A partially-sunken shrimp boat that was leaking petroleum was removed from the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway last week, nearly three weeks after sinking at its dock.

The U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Wilmington is still investigating the case and hasn't determined whether the boat owner will be cited or fined, said Ensign Karl Delooff.

"The investigation is still in progress, but it should be closing soon," Delooff said Friday. "The environmental impact should be negligible if there is any."

The trawler *No Way* sank at its dock near Holden Beach Bridge March 5 and the Coast Guard noticed a sheen on the water the following day. It was determined that diesel fuel and motor oil leaked from the damaged vessel.

A containment boom was used to keep the spill from spreading, but petroleum washed over the boom during the March 13 winter storm. "That storm really thrashed the area pretty good," Delooff said.

The 50-foot wooden trawler was removed from the waterway last Tuesday by a commercial salvage company hired by boat owner Ann Pittman, according to the Coast Guard.

"There would have been no damage to the environment if they came down here and gave me a hand."

—Gerald Pittman

Gerald Pittman, son of the owner, contends that the trawler wouldn't have sunk and wouldn't have leaked petroleum into the waterway if the Coast Guard had responded to calls before the boat sank.

Pittman said in a telephone interview last week that the Coast Guard was called twice the day before boat sank and asked for assistance. The Coast Guard didn't show up until the next day.

"All of this could have been avoided if they had come and helped me," Pittman said. "If they would have sent one little boat down here none of this would have happened. I don't understand. I thought that's what they were for."

Delooff said the Coast Guard's hands were tied by a law that requires the agency to allow commercial salvage companies to tackle such jobs when no lives are in danger and there isn't risk of injury.

"Our top priority is to save lives," Delooff said. "If there's no life in danger and there are commercial salvors available we have to allow them to do it. As soon as life is put in danger we can rush in and take over."

Although no lives were in danger, Pittman said the environment was being threatened by the petroleum spill.

"There would have been no damage to the environment if they came down here and gave me a hand," he said. "We don't want to pollute the environment. We feel really bad about it. We did all we could do."

Delooff said the law is open to interpretation in cases like the *No Way* incident. "When a situation like this occurs it's real fuzzy as to how far we can go. A lot of cases it is a judgment call."

Delooff said both the Coast Guard and boat owner have a responsibility to protect the environment. If the Coast Guard determines that a violation occurred, the owner could face a fine of up to \$25,000.

Holden Committee Says Sewer Plant Needed

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach's sewer committee believes treating and disposing of wastewater at a central plant would solve the island's pollution problems, according to a report presented last week to the board of commissioners.

The two-page report released last Wednesday says ground and surface waters are being polluted due to the inability of conventional septic systems to function properly on Holden Beach.

As part of its research, the fact-finding committee reviewed wastewater treatment studies commissioned by the town in 1987 and 1989 and discussed the issue with three engineering firms.

"The one thing all five firms agree upon is that the Town of Holden Beach's septic tank system is not providing proper disposition of our waste," the committee report states.

Town board members did not discuss the report last week. They decided to hold off until after Tuesday night's meeting regarding formation of a regional sewer district in the South Brunswick Islands.

Sewer committee members are Jim Griffin, Jack Potter, Jim Lowell, Helen White and Harold Steorts. Their two-page report indicates that the natural conditions at Holden Beach are not conducive to conventional septic systems.

"It appears that the problem on Holden Beach is that there is not enough aerobic treatment soil between the septic tank drain lines and the high water level to treat the effluents being discharged by the conventional septic tank systems."

"This high water level combined with the back and forth movement of water in the sub-soil (tide changes, runoff waters and rain) causes pollution in the sub-soils, groundwater and surface waters."

Committee members think the pollution problem could be solved

by moving septic tank effluent to another area for treatment and discharge.

"We could of course stop further building and heavily restrict the use of the existing septic tank systems but this would not be a realistic option," the report states.

The sewer committee has heard presentations from Powell Associates, Harmon Environmental Services and William C. Piver Engineer.

According to the report, Powell Associates agrees with the two previous wastewater studies in that "the density of development is too great for proper functioning of septic tank systems."

The committee reported that the five engineering firms have recommended three types of systems, but they do not agree on which one would be best for Holden Beach.

Speaking for the committee at last week's meeting, Lowell said the best option would be the "step system."

It pumps effluent from the septic tank to a treatment facility. Cost estimates for this type of system range from \$3.9 million to \$9.1 million.

Other alternatives include a conventional gravity-flow system with pumping stations located throughout the island. That would cost between \$8.8 million and \$15 million.

For approximately \$4 million, the town could build a "hybrid system" using a grinder and pump. Hook-up fees would range from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per household. Monthly service fees would be between \$20 and \$30.

Lowell also said building a sewer plant on the island is not economically feasible. The report says grants and low-interest loans might be available if Holden Beach formed a "sewage district" on the mainland.

Lowell said the committee is willing to do more work at the town board's request. "I don't think we're at a standstill or any end point," he said.

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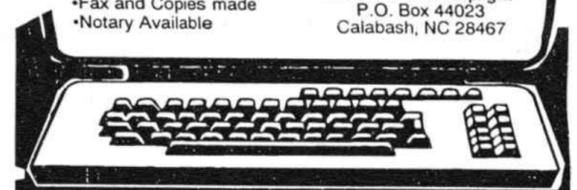
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