



Harbour Master's Safety Update 1/22

26 April 2022

Introduction

This first update on safety matters of 2022 within the River Hamble seeks to refresh on a few safety points drawn from last season, highlight an early trend this year and consider some important lessons identified in a recent routine report by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. Our objectives are to encourage reflection on the causes of these incidents, promote improved understanding of risk and help in the avoidance of situations which, at worst, can have tragic consequences. It is in the nature of this type of note to

focus on what can go wrong – I make no apology for that. For many, the subject matter will seem obvious. For others, regardless of experience or skill, we should all agree there are always lessons to be learned.

Without doubt, waterborne activity – including small craft - has increased in popularity over the past year. Many will have noticed how busy it has been when booking a berth in Solent Harbours and, equally, when afloat in inshore waters. It is not unreasonable to assume that this level of activity will continue. This inevitably brings vessels, people and navigational hazards into more frequent close proximity. This means that sound planning, maintaining a proper lookout and a safe speed are as relevant as ever. While we all consider that we exercise pretty good judgment and avoid unnecessary risk, it is worth looking at some of the cases highlighted in the MAIB report where people will have gone out on the water with the aim of having good safe fun. Thankfully, for the overwhelming majority, events have gone well. For some, however, the outcome has been very different.

These incidents show that safety margins are all too easily compromised by going too fast, not keeping that look-out, or assuming that pursuing a course of action ‘will be all right’ without considering the relevant factors. Events have a habit of causing surprise and it is worth thinking in advance about being able to change a plan in the event that something unexpected happens. Safety must always be the first consideration. It is an enabler of fun and not a restrictor.

As ever, this note is not about ‘pointing the finger’. It is my hope that publishing these observations will help everyone enjoy their time on the water more. I would be grateful if you could help me spread the word.

Current Issues

Speeding between Warsash and the Mouth of the River and Groundings.

To recap on the trends I mentioned in my last bulletin – speeding in the mouth of the River and groundings – in the anticipation that they are fresh in the mind. You may recall that a spate of groundings took place on Hook Spit between numbers 7 and 9 Marks South West of Warsash College Jetty. Here, the steep gradient outside the Main Channel that exists beyond the line between the Marks caught out a number of vessels. Most will be wary of drift towards Hook if it is the lee shore and the tide is running and keep appropriately clear. A three knot Spring ebb can mean a loss of 60cm in the height of tide there within 30 minutes. At the time of writing, no groundings here have yet taken place but it is nonetheless worthy of a reminder.

It is an unnecessary truth that speeding in the mouth of the River continues. The Easter weekend saw many resident vessels in a hurry to leave or return. The speed limit is 6 knots until No 1 Mark outwards and 6 knots from No 1 inwards. It is in place for reasons of safety. With the exception of Police and life-saving efforts, there can be no excuses for breaching

the speed limit which applies to everyone. The frequency of speeding over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend shows that this message has not been heeded by everyone. It is a matter of regret that previous safety bulletins which have made clear the problem and the need for a change in practice have not been hoisted onboard by a minority who are clearly either still unaware or, at worst, irresponsible and un-seamanlike. The consequence for those stopped must now be a written warning that will stand on record for five years. A further offence in these cases will lead to prosecution.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch Reports.

The latest MAIB Safety Digest contains three articles which reinforce the point that seemingly minor actions, and the cumulative effect of 'corner-cutting' or complacency in decision-making, either habitually or for some other reason, can lead to tragic consequences. For many, this bulletin will seem didactic. It is not. For those who would read it otherwise, I would encourage reflection on the hazards and the need to look after ourselves and those around us. All reports have a relevance to us in the Hamble.

Two Motor Vessels – Fatal Collision

A motor vessel in company with another decided to execute a close pass at speed of the second at the end of an enjoyable day at sea in good weather. The close pass took place at short notice and with no planning. A loss of control occurred because of hydrodynamic effects (shallow water and the proximity of the other vessel) at over six times the local speed limit and the first vessel collided with the second. There was no margin for error and the crew member on the foredeck of the first motor vessel was fatally injured.

Lessons identified:

1. Skippers and Masters must remember that it is they who are responsible for safety and not allow themselves to be influenced by passengers;
2. That speed limits are set for important reasons.

Swimming Near Moving Boats

Having chartered a motor vessel, a group of friends departed for a few days away to celebrate a birthday. While underway and with several of the group drinking alcohol, a member of the crew was pushed into the water. The helm of the motor vessel stopped and attempted to reverse towards the person in the water but overran him causing lacerations from which he did not recover.

Lessons identified:

1. Whether intended or accidental or because of 'horseplay', entering the water near a vessel underway is dangerous.

2. Alcohol consumption was a factor.
3. Lifejackets, while not specifically germane to the propellor impact, were not worn and would have been useful in keeping the casualty afloat.

RIB Grounding on a Sandbar

A 6m RIB grounded in choppy seas on a charted hazard with three persons on board, causing damage to the hull and tubes and leading to the RIB being in danger of sinking. The driver was able to call for Coastguard assistance and the RIB was recovered.

Lessons:

1. The skipper of any vessel should understand the safety advice (including charts, Notices to Mariners and other safety information) given for the waters being used.
2. Mariners should be aware of the location of hazards and the conditions it is safe to cross them.
3. RIBs are often constructed from several materials with different properties which flex at different rates. Assuming that a RIB is unsinkable is incorrect. It is important to know a vessel's design and sea condition limitations and to take care in not exceeding them.

I do hope you will find these observations helpful. Have an enjoyable and safe Summer and we look forward to seeing you on the water.

Jason Scott

Marine Director and Harbour Master