



Accident Report

Collision

Deep Star & Red Pepper

14 January 2006

Class C



NARRATIVE

On 14 January 2006, at about 0700 hours New Zealand Daylight Saving Time (NZDT) **Deep Star** left Tauranga harbour with 8 people on board. They were the Skipper, one Deckhand and 6 passengers.



Photograph 1
Deep Star alongside Coronation Pier, Tauranga

Deep Star proceeded to fishing grounds north-east of Motiti Island, arriving there at about 1000 hours. The vessel anchored while the passengers fished and, for the next four and a half hours, moved to different locations, anchoring each time while the passengers fished.

At about 1430 hours, **Deep Star** weighed anchor and started back to Tauranga.

The Skipper stated that before leaving the anchorage he had a good look around, particularly towards the direction in which he would be heading. He set a course of 240°(C) on the autopilot and sat on the starboard side of the wheelhouse to keep the lookout. The radar was switched off. The GPS and echo sounder were switched on. The passengers and Deckhand were in the cockpit aft.

Deep Star was making a speed of about 7.5 knots. The weather was good with a 20 knot south-west wind and a short choppy sea. The sun was on the starboard bow. Although it was glinting off the sea, it was not in the Skipper's eyes. The view ahead from the Skipper's seat was reasonably unobstructed as shown in *Photograph 2*. Spray, coming over the bows, may have reduced his visibility.



Photograph 2

View from the Skipper's seat of *Deep Star*

About 20 minutes after setting off from the fishing ground, *Deep Star* struck the pleasure craft *Red Pepper*, which was at anchor. The Skipper of *Deep Star* said he heard and felt a bump on the starboard shoulder as his vessel hit the starboard quarter of the other boat. He stopped his vessel straight away. *Red Pepper* was still afloat but its three occupants were in the water. The contact took place in position 37° 35'.3 S 176° 26'.5 E, 042° (T), distant 1.7 miles from Motiti Island Light.

Deep Star returned to *Red Pepper* to assist. The three persons got back into their boat. Although damaged, it was not sinking and no one was injured.

Deep Star accompanied *Red Pepper* back to Tauranga.

Deep Star is a wooden passenger vessel built in 1979 with the following ship's particulars:

Length Overall:	13.52m
Gross Tonnage:	32.10
Engine Power:	70kW

The vessel has a Safe Ship Management Certificate for Restricted Coastal, Inshore and Enclosed Limits, issued by SGS-M&I on 7 June 2005 and valid until 28 February 2009. The certification is for up to 22 passengers in Inshore Limits.

The Skipper has owned *Deep Star* since 1993. At first, he employed a qualified skipper until he had gained sufficient sea service to obtain his Commercial Launchmaster's Certificate. Since then he has operated the vessel himself, with assistance of a deckhand.

Red Pepper is pleasure boat of length 5.6 m. The owner has owned it for about 7 years. On 14 January, he took two friends out fishing. They left Tauranga harbour at 0600 hours and spent the day anchored in various locations near Motiti Island.

The occupants of *Red Pepper* saw *Deep Star* approaching from a long way off and expected it to alter course. Their boat was at anchor in about 50 m depth of water with the cable leading up and down. The owner said he could not see anyone in the wheelhouse of *Deep Star* as it approached from astern. When he realized it would not give way, there wasn't time to start the engine, so they jumped in the water to avoid injury.

Red Pepper was painted white with red stripes around the top of the hull and at the sides of the cabin. It was not displaying an anchor signal as prescribed by **Maritime Rule 22.30(1)(a)**.

Damage to *Red Pepper* was as follows:

- Cracks to the structure by the bunks, internally
- The cabin was racked and was cracked
- The transom was damaged
- The outboard bracket was broken and the auxiliary outboard engine lost
- The casing of the main outboard engine was damaged
- Damage to the gearbox was suspected
- The bilge pump would not work
- The steering was stiff
- Various articles, such as fishing rods and a wallet were lost.



Photograph 3
Damage to the transom of *Red Pepper*

LESSONS LEARNT

The Skipper of *Deep Star* could not explain why he failed to see *Red Pepper*. He said he was in the wheelhouse, keeping a lookout while navigating visually and using GPS and an electronic chart. He had operated the vessel without incident since 1993 and made frequent trips to the same area.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that Maritime New Zealand censure the Skipper of **Deep Star** for failing to keep a proper lookout. The letter of censure should suggest the following ways to improve the lookout:
 - Making the lookout a priority and giving it the full attention required.
 - Moving about to ensure the view is not obscured by window frames or the boat's fittings.
 - More use of radar.
 - Using binoculars to scan the horizon.

2. Skippers of small boats at anchor should be aware that they may not always be seen by approaching vessels and consider taking the following precautions:
 - Being ready to start engines at short notice.
 - Rigging the anchor warp so it may be slipped in an emergency.
 - Having an efficient sound signal and white flares.
 - Waving an orange flag.
 - Displaying an anchor signal by day and an all round white light by night.