

PRESS RELEASE – LOSS OF CHIEF WILLIAM SAULIS

The fishing vessel Chief William Saulis is owned and operated by Yarmouth Sea Products Limited. The captain and crewmembers of the vessel were engaged in scallop fishing in the Bay of Fundy and were operating out of the port of Digby, Nova Scotia.

It is a fibreglass vessel built in 2004 in Lower East Pubnico 56.22 gross tons and 50 feet length overall.

The vessel departed Digby on the 12th December and was engaged in fishing on the 12TH, 13th 14th and 15th until approximately 5:50 a.m. on the 15th.

The company received a call as a result of the automatic activation of the EPIRB (emergency position locator) located at approximately 6 a.m. local on the 15th. An attempt was made to contact the vessel by cellphone shortly after and there was no response.

There appears to have been an unknown event causing the vessel to capsize as no distress call is known to have been made.

Since that time the company has reported the incident to the appropriate regulatory bodies and has provided information to the them throughout the day Tuesday to the present time.

The company has conducted its own internal investigation since the incident and confirms that there were 6 crewmembers aboard the vessel including the captain. It has confirmed that all of the statutory obligations for the maintenance and certification of the safety equipment on the vessel were up to date and valid at the time of the incident.

The black box which provides information to the vessel management system was checked by the company and it was determined that it appears the fishing vessel left the fishing ground at approximately 1 a.m. local time on the 15th. The black box provides hourly updates of location information through the VMS system. The system indication shows that the vessel continued steaming toward Digby until the signal stopped around 6 a.m. local. The company has spoken to other fishermen who were fishing during the same period of time who spoke with Captain Roberts on Monday by intervessel communication and every indication indicates that the trip was proceeding as normal.

During Monday the forecast indicated that the weather would deteriorate later on Monday and into Tuesday. Because of the forecast, vessels began to depart the fishing ground and proceed to the home port of Digby late Monday night.

A review of the company records indicates that all required maintenance and inspections of safety equipment was current and up to date. The vessel's steamship inspection certificate was in force and valid until April 1st, 2021.

Captain Roberts was a very experienced fishing captain on scallop draggers.

He has fished for Yarmouth Sea Products and other companies over the years on different scallop vessels. He is highly regarded by his peers in the industry.

He had been operating the Chief William Saulis for most of 2020. The crewmembers, several of whom were from Yarmouth, were experienced fishermen.

The company is appreciative of the assistance of the Full Bay Scallop Association who have provided assistance and advice since the incident occurred.

Both the association and the company are aware that there will be financial needs for the families of the lost fishermen. They will be reaching out to their membership in an effort to raise funds for that purpose. It is expected that the details of the fundraising effort will be available in the coming days.

Yarmouth Sea Products for itself, is committed to cooperating fully with the Transportation Safety Board, Transport Canada and the provincial Department of Labour.

The company extends on behalf of all the fishermen employed by the company who share in the grief at the loss of these men, its condolences to the families and dependants of the lost fishermen.

The company has been advised that one of the fishermen has been recovered and identified. For privacy reasons, that information will be shared to the Public by the regulatory agencies.