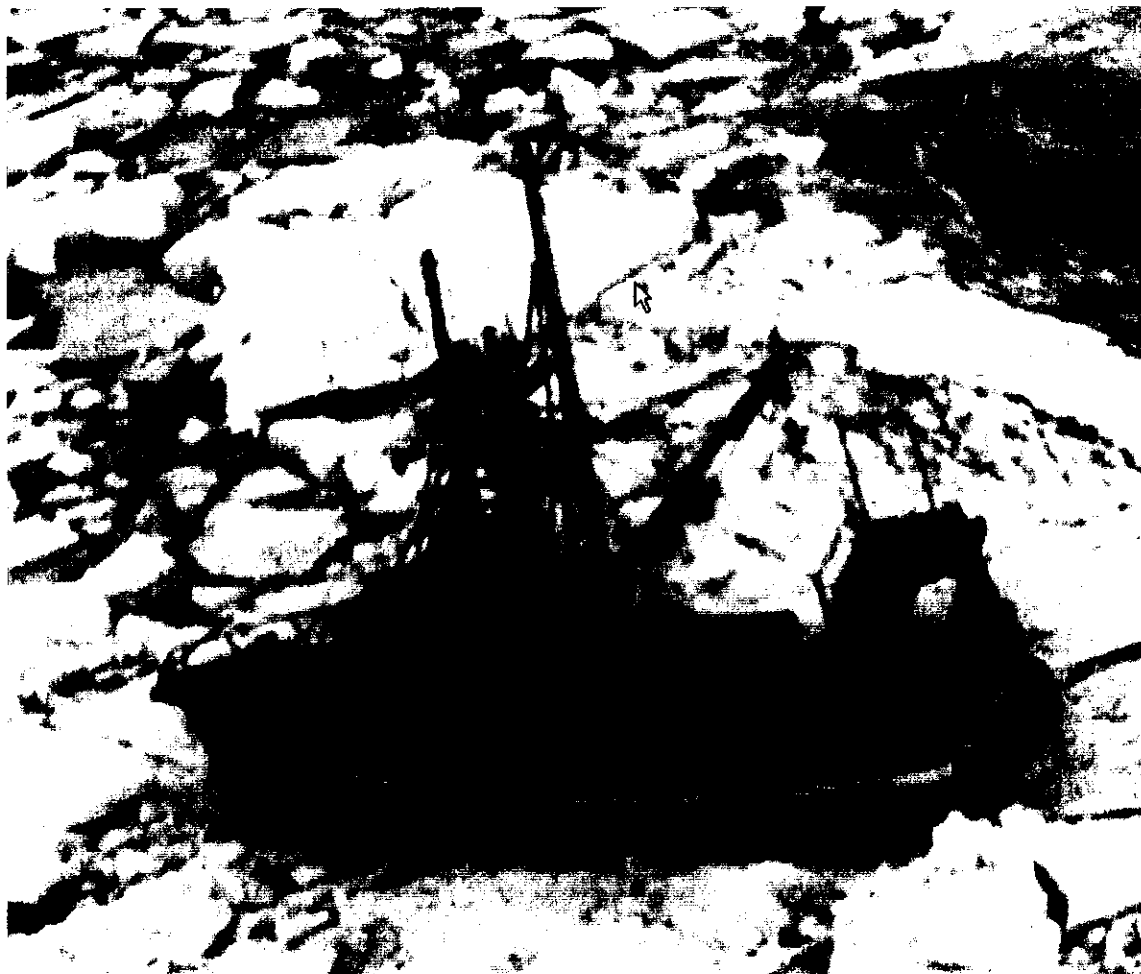


Search and Rescue Operation Report

F/V L'Acadien II – Case H2008-00319
March 28th/29th, 2008



Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Halifax

Forward

The following is a report, from a JRCC Halifax perspective, of the search and rescue incident involving the Fishing Vessel L'Acadien II. It has been prepared, as specified in Chapter 9 of the National Search and Rescue Manual, to record the pertinent details of the case and make recommendations to improve the SAR system.

This report details the decision and actions of the SAR system prior to the towing operation involving the F/V L'Acadien II and the subsequent efforts to rescue survivors after the capsizing of the vessel. An additional report to address the towing operation and Coast Guard policy is being prepared by a team of experts appointed by the Commissioner of the Coast Guard. It is expected that this investigation will look into all aspects and factors surrounding the incident including the towing operation and produce a comprehensive report that will examine topics outside the scope of SAR.

Part 1 Search Object Details

Vessel Name	L'Acadien II
Type	Fishing vessel
Official Number	811285
Construction	Aluminum
Gross Tonnage	34.36
Registered Length	12.56m
Home Port	Cap-aux-Meules, Iles de la Madeleine, PQ
Colour	Blue hull, white wheelhouse, white trim
Persons on board	6
Description	Single screw, aluminum hulled fishing vessel with the wheelhouse forward, stabilizers near midships and an A-frame on the stern.
Registered owner	Les Pecheries Bruno Bourque Inc.
Lifesaving equipment	1 Rigid Life raft - 4 persons (Ovatek) 1 approved boat - 4 persons 6 lifejackets 5 survival suits (Mustang) 2 lifebuoys 18 pyrotechnics 1 Class 1 EPIRB
Communications	VHF FM radio, cellular telephone
SAR Assistance Required	The fishing vessel's captain advised that they had suffered rudder damage in the ice and required assistance to a port in order to make repairs.

Part 1 Search Object Details cont'd

Nature of distress While under tow towards Sydney by CCGS Sir William Alexander, the vessel struck an ice floe and capsized. A following fishing vessel, Madelinot Warlord, rescued two of the crewmembers. Of the four remaining crewmembers, a SAR Tech dive team recovered three deceased but the fourth remains missing.

Crewmembers Bruno Bourque - deceased
 Gilles Leblanc - deceased
 Marc-Andre Deraspe - deceased
 Claude Deraspe - rescued
 Bruno-Pierre Bourque - rescued
 Carl Aucoin - missing

Part 2 Details of SAR Operation

RCC Action/Search Operations/Rescue Operations

A timeline is attached at Annex A that details all RCC actions and Search and Rescue operations.

Summary of Significant Decisions

The following is a summary of the significant decisions made by JRCC and the Commanding Officer Sir William Alexander during this incident:

28/1829z F/V L'Acadien II requested an ice escort. CCGS Des Groseilliers was alongside the vessel and sent engineers aboard but subsequently did not advise any Regional Operations Centre (ROC), Rescue Centre or Ice Office that the vessel was disabled. Because the vessel requested an ice escort and not a tow, JRCC passed the information to Ice Halifax for action as per standard operating procedures.

28/2024z JRCC tasks CCGS Des Groseilliers to assist F/V Ginny CR who reports taking on water off Cape North, Cape Breton. The vessel had significant water ingress but her pumps were managing. CCGS Des Groseilliers was tasked to assist the vessel to the ice edge where another fishing vessel would escort her to Cap-aux-Meules. This would allow Des Groseilliers to remain in the vicinity of the sealing fleet where JRCC anticipated an increased risk due to forecasted wind and ice conditions. When tasking Des Groseilliers, JRCC was not aware that L'Acadien II had not received an ice escort and was disabled in the ice due to rudder damage.

28/2148z JRCC tasks CCGS Sir William Alexander to assist the disabled F/V Madelinot War Lord and F/V L'Acadien II. As a result of the heavy ice reported in their area and forecasted northeast winds, there was some urgency to get these vessels out of the ice before the pressure increased and created more serious problems.

29/0413z CCGS Sir William Alexander (SWA) advises that F/V L'Acadien II struck a piece of ice and capsized. F/V Madelinot War Lord recovered 2 crewmembers but 4 are still missing and assumed trapped in the hull. CCGS Sir William Alexander is standing by the overturned hull and has launched their FRC to recover any other crewmembers that may surface. JRCC tasked the standby Hercules (R307) and Cormorant (R903) from Greenwood to deploy the SAR Techs for a rescue dive.

29/0503z JRCC and the Commanding Officer CCGS Sir William Alexander discussed the options for rescuing survivors who may be trapped in the hull. Factors considered were:

- Cold-water immersion – it was assumed that survivors were at least partly immersed in very cold water and had limited survival time.

- Dive rescue – it would take SAR Techs at least 3 hours to arrive on scene and begin a rescue dive.
- Dive feasibility – it was not certain that divers could safely drop their equipment and jump themselves into the ice covered waters and perform a rescue.
- Risk of losing the hull – it was understood that once the hull was cut there was a significant risk it would sink. There was also the possibility of the hull sinking before the dive team arrived whether it was cut or not.
- Risk to the crew of Sir William Alexander – crew from SWA would have to go on the hull to perform a rescue, which due to the risk of sinking involved significant risk for them.

It was agreed that given the cold water and length of time before a rescue dive, Sir William Alexander's crew would secure the hull to reduce the risk of sinking and attempt a rescue by cutting into it.

29/0548z JRCC Halifax requests MRSC Quebec to review the incident log and contact the Surete du Quebec to begin the next of kin notification process. JRCC subsequently requests that one person, preferably a clergy member or indirect family member, be appointed as a liaison between the families and JRCC. This was done for several reasons:

- A single point of contact would reduce the number of calls to the JRCC during a very busy period.
- All of the families would get a consistent message, as opposed to each family calling at a different time and getting information based on the facts available at that time.
- During similar situations in the past, conflicts have arisen among the families involved with accusations made of information being withheld. A single person, preferably not close to any one family, has proved to be the best way of averting this problem.

29/0644z Commanding Officer Sir William Alexander decided to cease the cutting operation. Due to the construction of the fishing vessel and limitations of the tools available, it was deemed impossible to rescue anyone by this method. Additionally the hull was sinking lower in the water and becoming unstable, so it was mutually agreed that the hull would be secured until the dive team arrived on scene. The possibility of righting or towing the vessel into shallow water was also discussed but it was agreed that it was too risky to attempt either of these actions at this time.

29/1050z SAR Tech team leader made a decision to end dive operations. Following four dives, the SAR Tech team consulted with the Commanding Officer SWA and decided to terminate the dive operation, as there was no hope of finding survivors inside the vessel. The vessel was deemed to be 90% searched with only 10% remaining. The SAR techs were all suffering some symptoms of cold injury such as frozen extremities, hypothermia and muscle cramps.

29/1150z JRCC decided to search the area surrounding the capsized hull and the track made during the tow and drift of Sir William Alexander and L'Acadien II. Although it was highly unlikely, this search was initiated to ensure that the missing person had not surfaced at some point without being spotted by Sir William Alexander, Madelinot War Lord or any of the aircraft in the area.

29/2000z Search and rescue operations were reduced under the authority of the Search and Rescue Region Commander. This was based on two criteria:

- There was no longer a reasonable chance of finding a survivor who by this time would have spent fifteen hours in the cold water.
- It was improbable that a survivor could escape from the capsized vessel and not be seen by the crews of Sir William Alexander or Madelinot Warlord. But, In order to eliminate this possibility all reasonable effort was expended and no survivor or evidence to suggest someone had escaped from the hull was found.

29/2002z CCGS Sir William Alexander was released from the search and rescue incident and departed for Sydney. The decision to proceed to Sydney was based on several factors:

- The accident occurred in the Nova Scotia RCMP and Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. Sydney was the nearest port to facilitate a transfer of the deceased to their custody.
- The Sydport facility could be secured, allowing the transfer of the deceased with some privacy and dignity and provide the crew of Sir William Alexander an opportunity to deal with the aftermath of the incident.
- Sydney was the most practical port for the agencies that required access to the ship and crew, including the Transportation Safety Board, a critical incident stress team and Coast Guard officials.

Search and Rescue Units Tasked

SAR Unit	Tasked	Departure	Response Time
CCGS Sir William Alexander	28/2159z ¹	28/2221z	22 minutes
Cormorant R 903	29/0423z	29/0635z	2 hours 12 min ²
Hercules R 307	29/0437z	29/0600z	1 hour 23 min
Cormorant R 910	29/1219z	29/1321z	1 hour 2 min

Search and Rescue Unit hours

SAR Unit	Transit Hours	SAR Hours	Total Hours
CCGS Sir William Alexander	5.0	18.6	23.6
Cormorant R903	4.6	0.3	4.9
Cormorant R910	2.3	2.2	4.5
Hercules R307	2.6	4.4	7.0
F/V Madelinot Warlord	0.0	16.0	16.0

¹ This is the time that the tasking call ended

² Delay is a result of the crew changing aircraft due to a technical problem

Part 3 Search Cessation

29/2000z Search and rescue operations were reduced under the authority of Rear Admiral McFadden, Halifax Search and Rescue Region Commander.

This decision was based on the following criteria:

- There was no longer a reasonable chance of finding a survivor who had spent fifteen hours in the cold water.
- The area had been searched and all reasonable effort expended but no survivor or anything to suggest someone had escaped from the hull undetected was found.

The case was handed over to the RCMP as a missing persons case.

Number of people on board	6
Survivors	2
Fatalities	3
Missing	1

Part 4 Conclusions/Recommendations

Search Mission Coordinator Recommendations

SAR and Ice Operations Cooperation

SAR and Ice Operations are Coast Guard programs that have many common goals and shared resources. As a result, it is in the best interests of the Coast Guard and its clients that there is a high level of cooperation at both the planning and operational levels. In this case it became apparent that SAR and Ice Ops were working independently. For example, on the day before this incident it was not clear to JRCC, that Ice Operations Halifax had made a decision not to task an icebreaker to escort any sealing vessels for this particular fishery. Additionally, there is often a grey area when it is not clear if a vessel requires icebreaker or search and rescue assistance. Further guidance would assist JRCC staff in deciding on the most suitable service.

Recommendation

1. SAR representatives attend all planning conferences for Arctic and Gulf Ice seasons to discuss any change in policies and procedures that may affect either program.
2. SAR representatives are invited to join weekly Ice Operations conference calls when there is potential for increased SAR involvement due to ice, weather, vessel activities or policy changes.
3. A more comprehensive set of guidelines should be developed to help operational staff define which program is responsible to provide assistance and when responsibility for an operation should be passed from one program to another. This information should be included in the National SAR Manual, Ice Operations SOPs and MCTS Operations Manuals.

Coast Guard Vessel Availability for SAR

At the time of the incident CCGS Sir William Alexander was effectively tasked to deliver three separate programs:

- Thirty minute SAR standby
- Assist the RCMP with law enforcement (Farley Mowat)
- Provide icebreaker assistance in the Sydney area if required.

SAR Coordinators were given instruction not to task the vessel for a non-distress case without consulting with the ROC.

This is not an isolated occurrence and they seem to be increasing in frequency. The SAR Needs Analysis 1993 specifies that as a result of the exposed waters, two offshore patrol vessels are required, one in the east and one in the west zone, off Nova Scotia at all times. The ROC attempts to accommodate this but with limited resources, multiple high profile program demands and unscheduled maintenance issues it is apparently becoming more difficult.

Recommendation

CCG Maritimes Region should review this issue with respect to resource levels, multi-tasking procedures and program priorities. It is imperative that the requirements of the SAR Needs Analysis are met. Otherwise, at some point a major SAR will occur off the Coast of Nova Scotia with no capable Coast Guard vessel available to respond in a timely and safe manner.

JRCC Operations Room/Staff Interaction

During the review of this incident it became apparent that information flow between workstations in the operations room was not optimal. Information was received but not always disseminated throughout the room. Although no critical information was missed and there was no negative bearing on the outcome, this issue should be addressed to ensure the operations team is working as effectively as possible.

Recommendations

1. The operations room should be renovated with the assistance of an ergonomics expert familiar with the requirements of this type of facility.
2. All operational staff should receive training similar to bridge resource or cockpit resource management. This training should be specific to the JRCC and based on the prosecution of SAR incidents.

SAR Aircraft Reliability

The Cormorant helicopter was slightly delayed getting to the scene due to the crew having to change aircraft as the result of a problem with communications equipment.

Recommendation

CF should review this issue with respect to resource levels, program demands, availability, reliability and maintenance in order to determine if there is a systemic problem.

Capsized Vessel Rescues

Coast Guard lacks formal training, detailed procedures and the proper equipment to guide and assist crews when dealing with this type of scenario.

Recommendation

Coast Guard implements training and develops procedures for ships' crews and SAR staff when dealing with this type of incident. The investigation, evaluation and purchase of suitable equipment to assist crews with a capsized rescue operation should also be initiated.

SAR Tech OTV Kit

The OTV (Over Turned Vessel) kit is presently configured for helicopter deployment. During the mission, the kit was delivered from the Hercules by parachute only due to the extraordinary resourcefulness displayed by the SAR Techs on duty that night, when they stripped down the kit and jury rigged it for parachute deployment. The SAR Techs

reported numerous equipment issues with the equipment during the dive operation in the icy waters.

Recommendations

1. The SAR Tech community should evaluate the dive equipment to be used during dive operations in icy waters.
2. The OTV kit should be configured to permit both parachute deployment or helicopter deployment.

Communications Problems

JRCC had difficulty faxing messages to both CCGS Des Groseilliers and CCGS Sir William Alexander during this incident.

Recommendation

Coast Guard Technical Services review the problems experienced during these incidents and implement measures to improve communications reliability between JRCC and CG vessels.

SAR aircraft primarily use HF radio to communicate with JRCC. This has been recognized as unreliable and inefficient during SAR incidents. Secondary SAR resources such as other CF aircraft, Transport Canada's pollution patrol and Provincial Airlines/DFO aircraft use satellite communications that are very reliable and allow the quick, efficient transfer of information. Reliable and efficient communications onboard primary SAR aircraft would allow more efficient tasking of resources and improve the SAR response.

Recommendation

The CF should install satellite communications as soon as possible onboard all SAR aircraft. This equipment should provide voice, data and fax service.

Coast Guard Vessel/CF SAR Aircraft Tracking

A number of Newfoundland Region's large vessels have tracking equipment onboard that give operations centres an accurate, timely picture of Coast Guard resource positions. This type of information allows JRCC, Ice Ops and other operational centres to utilize resources more efficiently, particularly during periods of high activity. Additionally it can serve as a safety system for the small vessel fleet as the operational centre can automatically be notified if a vessel misses a scheduled report.

Recommendation

All Coast Guard vessels and CF SAR aircraft have this functionality installed.

JRCC Technical Issues

During this incident there were three separate issues with equipment in the JRCC. The Inmarsat B terminal was out of service, the maritime coordinator's computer workstation was unreliable and the Comlog phone recording system was not functioning properly. None of these issues had a direct impact on the outcome of the incident but cumulatively

they have a detrimental effect on the operations in the JRCC. Given the variety of technical systems at JRCC Halifax, the operational staff often adapts to working around problems as solutions or fixes may not be immediately available.

Recommendation

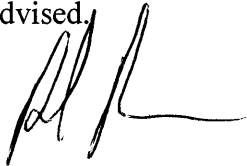
In the last ten years the JRCC has gone from paper log keeping and charts to almost total electronic case prosecution. As a result, many new technologies and systems have been introduced to the centre but no comprehensive management plan, budget or staffing has been put in place to maintain and manage these systems. It is recommended that a technology review and audit be conducted with the goal of a comprehensive maintenance, tech training and financial plan implemented nationally and at the JRCC.

Next of Kin Notification

During this incident there was a communication breakdown between the NOK representative, Sûreté du Québec (SQ) and the families of the crewmembers. At 28/1527z JRCC advised the SQ that the search would be reduced at 2000z. The SQ agreed to advise all of the families but unfortunately this did not happen which resulted in unnecessary anguish for the family of Mr. Aucoin, in particular. JRCC recognizes and deeply regrets that this occurred and will take steps to reduce the possibility of this happening in the future.

Recommendation

The National SAR Manual and JRCC/MRSC Standard Operating Procedures should specify that in addition to an early notification of a pending search reduction, the SM/SMC will confirm at the actual time of search reduction that all NOK have been advised.



P. Rudden
Maritime Coordinator
JRCC Halifax

JRCC Remarks/Recommendations

RSMS Recommendations

SAR and Ice Operations Cooperation

The JRCC Halifax RSMS did attend the Arctic Planning workshop in May 2008 and it is intended that the participation of a SAR representative will be included in all future Gulf and Arctic planning meetings and conferences calls.

Ice breaking operations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence spans three Coast Guard and four DFO Fisheries Regions. There is a need for clear and concise national reporting procedures between the Regional Ice, ROC, JRCC, MRSC and C&P offices when dealing with disabled fishing vessels in ice. There was a breakdown of communication between the centres for this seal fishery resulting in a loss of information and situational awareness about the movements of the sealing fleet and the CCGS Des Groseilliers by JRCC Halifax and Ice Maritimes. Loss of information related to the breakdown of the L'Acadien II earlier in the day and the policy of ice escort for fishing vessels not being relayed to JRCC Halifax. Clear guidelines, detailing when a vessel in ice transitions from an Ice Assistance case to SAR case, need to be developed by Coast Guard Headquarters in Ottawa and relayed to all Regional Offices.

There is a need for a national Coast Guard case operational computer program, similar to the SARMaster program utilized in Canada's Rescue Centres, that would enable all Regional ROCs, Ice Offices, JRCC/MRSCs and Headquarters to manage interregional incidents and share information more easily. Coast Guard Headquarters should investigate the use of a current program such as INNAV, SARMaster or CANSARP or develop a new National Program to manage Coast Guard operational incidents.

Coast Guard Availability for SAR

Serviceability and multi-tasking of vessels assigned to maintain primary search and coverage regularly affects the quality of that coverage. Near daily discussions and negotiations between the RSMS at JRCC Halifax and the ROC are required to risk manage losses in SAR coverage. The restrictions placed on the CCGS Sir William Alexander leading up to this case are indicative of a systemic problem with Offshore SAR Coverage that regularly result in the loss of 30 minute standby, use of less capable vessels for Primary SAR Coverage or restrictions placed on vessels due the requirements of other programs. For example, in the weeks surrounding this incident Offshore SAR coverage was maintained by the CCGS Teleost while engaged in science operations and outside of the required zone. Often a single vessel secured in Dartmouth is used to covers both SAR zones in effect providing poor coverage to all offshore areas.

More accurate reporting of the quality of Offshore SAR coverage is required to determine the extent of the loss of Offshore SAR Coverage, to ensure Maritimes Region is meeting the requirements as stated in the SAR Needs Analysis and to reflect the realistic quality of Offshore SAR coverage provided in the Maritimes Region.

JRCC Operations Room/Staff Interaction

With an expanded workforce since the 1998 JRCC Halifax Workload Review, it has been determined that the JRCC operations room is too small with ergonomic restrictions which affect current operations. The OIC and RSMS are currently working on a three-year infrastructure project with DND that includes the redesign and possible expansion of the operations room to address these problems with 2008/2009 identified for the development of a design plan and 2009/2010 for renovations.

The new Continued Proficiency Training for SAR Coordinators provided by the Canadian Coast Guard College includes a module on Bridge Resource Management (BRM). This course is still in the development phase with two pilot courses complete and will be reviewed to determine if it is meeting the BRM needs of JRCC Halifax.

Capsized Vessel Rescues

The knowledge of vessel stability, ship construction and marine engineering required to make an informed decision on dealing with capsized vessels highlights the need for Maritime SAR Coordinators to possess a Deck Officers Certificate of Competency.

There are currently no national Coast Guard guidelines or procedures for rescuing survivors from capsized vessels. It is recommended Coast Guard Headquarters investigate, evaluation and purchase suitable equipment to assist crews with a capsized rescue operation and develop operational guidelines for these situations.

Communications Problems

Effective and reliable communications are the key to any successful search and rescue mission. JRCC Halifax will implement a more rigorous communication check with all Coast Guard vessels operating in the Halifax SRR to identify any potential technical problems and ensure those problems are addressed.

Coast Guard Vessel Tracking

There is an immediate need for real time tracking of all Coast Guard resources in the Maritimes region. This is already accomplished for Newfoundland Region vessels through the VMS system and Quebec Region vessels through the INNAV system and should be implemented nationally.

JRCC Technical Issues

JRCC Halifax is a highly technical centre with many independent networks, systems and equipment including, but not limited to, SAR Mission Management System (DND Managed), CANSARP (CG Managed), telephones and recording equipment (DND Managed), satellite equipment (CG Managed). Long term management of these systems is handled at a national level but day to day support is provide onsite by DND technicians and one Coast Guard employee, the SAR Systems Support Officer.

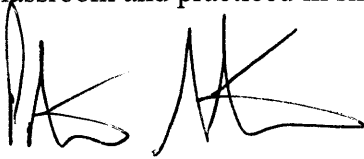
The job description of the SAR Systems Support Officer is currently under classification review. There is need for this review to be completed as soon as possible so that any

staffing and qualification deficiencies may be identified. Administrative staffing issues leading up to this incident prevented the SAR Systems Support Officer from focusing on the JRCC Technical issues. This situation has been rectified with the return of all indeterminate Coast Guard Administrative staff to JRCC Halifax.

Next of Kin Notification

The OIC and RSMS are currently reviewing Next-of-Kin notification protocol to ensure this important aspect of any SAR case is handled in the most respectful and effective manner.

The Search Mission Coordinator Course at the Canadian Coast Guard College should be reviewed to ensure the Next-of-Kin notification process instruction is provided in the classroom and practiced in simulation.

Handwritten signature of P. Stow, consisting of stylized initials and a surname.

P. Stow
Regional Supervisor Maritime SAR
Canadian Coast Guard
JRCC Halifax

OIC Remarks

I agree with the observations and recommendations of the author. His work has served to compile the details of the SAR case and has resulted in valuable recommendations to improve the overall SAR system. I also support the recommendations of the RSMS and will work with him to address the issues noted above. I will add amplifying comment to a couple of areas.

JRCC Operations Room/Staff Interaction

The points related to potential internal JRCC improvements are very well taken. The issue of internal communications during case prosecution is particularly pertinent. The layout of the JRCC Operations Room is not optimized for the information sharing that is critical to efficient case prosecution. An ergonomic study was undertaken to assess the space requirements for the JRCC and determine the best layout to optimize information flow. That study was the impetus for initiating a project to renovate the JRCC. Funding sources are being actively pursued to ensure the renovation can be done as quickly as possible, in sequence with other, interdependent projects. Support from senior leadership in both the CF and CCG have been engaged for their support of these important initiatives.

The recommendation by the author to enhance operational communications and team development training for JRCC CF and CCG staff is supported. This may take the form of CCG Bridge Resource Management (BRM) training or something similar with the goal of formalizing the sharing of operational information and providing feedback within the operational setting of a JRCC Operations Room. JRCC Halifax staff will explore options for this training through liaison with CF/CCG Trainers.

Additionally, options will be explored to enhance Risk Assessment Training for JRCC staff. This could provide additional “tools” for SAR Coordinators when faced with decisions regarding deployment of SAR Tech teams for operational jumps and dives as well as decisions regarding rescues from capsized vessels.

I am very pleased with the SAR coordination aspects of this case. It is clear to me that the staff at JRCC Halifax and at MRSC Quebec worked through the challenges described above and put forward the total effort I expect for any distress case. Their willingness to explore every option to locate and save the crew of this vessel was of the highest standard. Well done to them.

SAR Aircraft Reliability/Availability

Aircraft reliability and availability is a challenge that is well known to the Air Force. A number of studies have been conducted to investigate potential solutions to Cormorant and Hercules SAR aircraft availability challenges and those efforts continue. Most recently, a Cormorant Campaign Plan has been initiated which will gradually improve Cormorant availability to almost double the current rate in the next two years.

While not a reliability issue, the subject of SAR standby response posture (RP) for CF air assets remains an outstanding issue. Air resources were on the normal 2 hr RP when this incident occurred. A detailed study on SAR RP was recently conducted by the Chief of the Air Staff. Decisions regarding the recommendations in that study have not yet been promulgated but should be made and communicated as soon as possible as confirmation of the optimum SAR RP for CF assets.

SAR Aircraft Tracking

The author's comments regarding SAR resource tracking are noted. It is recognized that this was not a negative factor in this SAR case; however, it would have assisted SAR Coordinators in achieving greater Situation Awareness (SA). I take it as a given that increased SA greatly aids in SAR coordination and results in more efficient and effective utilization of resources. I support his comment on this issue.

Communications

SATCOM capability has been identified as a long-standing deficiency in FW and RW SAR aircraft. This capability gap results in less efficient employment of aircraft. Real-time communications with SAR aircraft will result in more efficient taskings and allow stand-down of resources at the earliest opportunity, saving scarce aircraft hours. Currently, there is an ongoing SATCOM trial for the Cormorant which is expected to result in the acquisition and fleet fitment of this capability. A similar trial on the Hercules has been initiated but is currently prioritized too low to allow testing and evaluation (T&E). 1 Cdn Air Div has been requested to initiate a review of the prioritization level with a view to encouraging T&E.

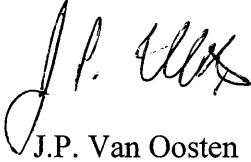
JRCC Technical Issues

As pointed out by the Coordinator, there were three separate equipment issues that came up during this SAR case. The Inmarsat B terminal was out of service, the Maritime Coordinator's computer workstation was unreliable and the Comlog phone recording system was not functioning properly. Each of these issues is being addressed and in fact, were being addressed at the time of the incident. Troubleshooting of the Inmarsat B terminal was being done at the time. Since the case, the problem was identified and rectified. The JRCC computer workstations had also been scheduled for lifecycling. The new equipment has arrived in the JRCC and building of the new workstations has commenced. Lastly, the cable problems with the one channel of the Comlog phone recording system has been rectified and it is fully operational. Due to the highly technical nature of the JRCC equipment, periodic glitches will occur. It is recognized that these technical issues can detract from the efficient coordination of a SAR case so whenever a problem is reported, it is investigated and addressed as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

It is known that this report is not the only documentation being prepared in the aftermath of this event. It is hoped that the details contained here will assist the agencies conducting investigations to compile all of the facts.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the tragic circumstances surrounding the loss of life in this case. Our sincere condolences go out to the families of those who died in this tragic case.



J.P. Van Oosten
Major
Officer in Charge
JRCC Halifax

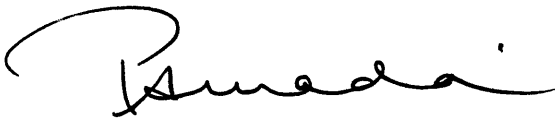
SRR Commander Remarks

I agree with the observations and recommendations contained in this report. They serve the intended purpose of recording the relevant details surrounding the L'Acadien II SAR case, and of applying them as appropriate to inform recommendations for improving the SAR system.

There can be no doubt that this case involved terrible tragedy. The fact that the L'Acadien II capsized while being assisted out of the ice highlights the inherent dangers associated with operating vessels at sea, especially in and around ice, and particularly during the seal harvest. My most sincere condolences go out to the families and crew-mates of the men who were lost as a result of this accident.

I wish to echo the comments of the Officer in Charge of the JRCC regarding SAR coordination of this event. The SAR coordination aspects of this case were handled very professionally and proactively. It is unfortunate that the excellent performance of this important SAR unit was marred by loss of life at the scene of action. Well done to the Coordinators.

I will ensure that progress is made as rapidly as practicable towards implementing the many recommendations submitted in this report. Indeed, I am confident that most of them will be addressed as a result of parallel investigations already underway.



P.A. Maddison
Rear-Admiral
Commander Halifax Search and Rescue Region

Attachments - Weather reports

Environment Canada Marine Forecast valid March 28th 2219z

Cabot Strait

Forecast:

Freezing spray warning continued.

Winds light becoming northeast 10 to 15 knots this evening then increasing to northeast 15 to 20 overnight. Winds increasing to northwest 25 to 30 Saturday afternoon.

Occasional snow beginning This afternoon tapering to occasional flurries Saturday morning.

Visibility fair to poor in precipitation. Freezing spray over open water beginning Saturday afternoon. Temperatures minus 2 to zero lowering to near minus 5 Saturday morning.

Outlook for Sunday...Strong to gale force northwesterlies.

Environment Canada Weather Report 2200z, Sydney, NS

Wind NE @ 10kts, temperature -3C, barometer 1007, snow and fog.

Sir William Alexander Sitrep 0300z – F/V L'Acadien II under tow

Wind NNW @ 5/10kts, temperature -2C, barometer 1012, cloudy and clear.

Sir William Alexander Sitrep 1100z – Dive Operations ended

Wind NNW @ 5/10kts, temperature -2C, barometer 1010, cloudy and clear.

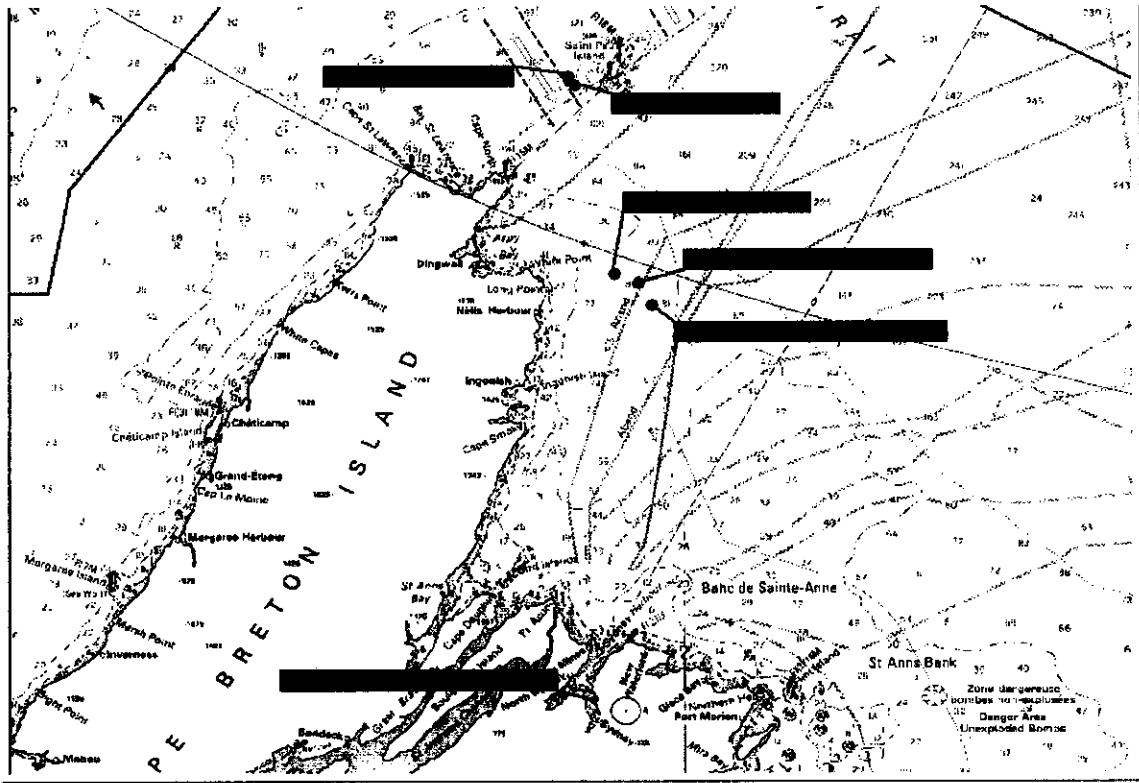
Sir William Alexander Sitrep 1500z – Cormorant search ends

Wind NxW @ 10/15kts, temperature +1C, Barometer 1012, cloudy and clear, sea temperature +0.75C.

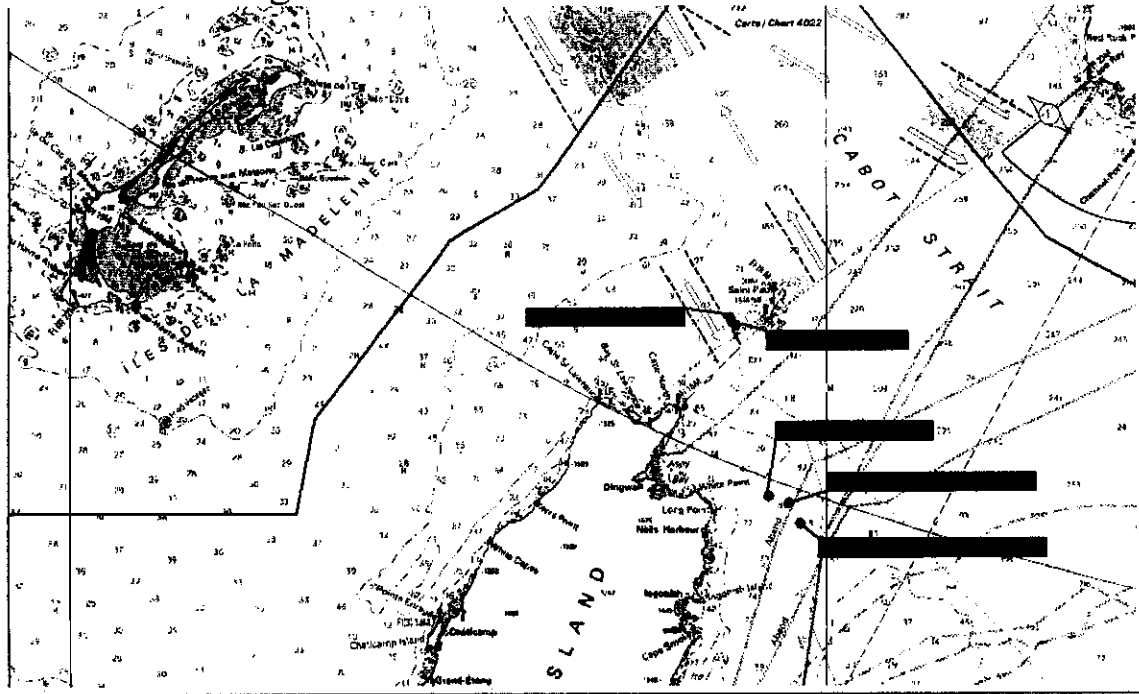
Sir William Alexander Sitrep 2035z – Search reduced

Wind NNW @ 10/15kts, temperature -4C, barometer 1013, cloudy and clear.

Attachment - Charts Overview



Vessels and Magdalen Islands



F/V L'Acadien II - SAR Case H2008-00319
JRCC Halifax Timeline

The following timeline is a compilation from JRCC logs and phone recordings during the F/V L'Acadien II and other concurrent SAR incidents. Where there is a difference between the log time and the phone recording time the recording time has been used, as this is generally the most accurate.

Time	Friday March 28th
1829z	Sydney MCTS (VCO) advises that the F/V L'Acadien II is requesting an ice escort. CCGS Des Groseillers (Des Gros) is alongside the vessel and has an engineer onboard. JRCC passes this information to Ice Operations Halifax (Ice Ops) for action.
1904z	VCO advises F/V Ginny CR is taking on some water through a broken rudder box but not in immediate danger. He is requesting an escort to the ice edge where he will proceed to the Magdalen I on his own. JRCC advises VCO to pass the request to Ice Ops for action. VCO questioned this as he was taking on water but JRCC confirms the vessel is only asking for an escort and can make his own way to Magdalen Islands once clear of the ice.
1917z	Sydney MCTS advises further information on the Ginny CR and advises that Ice Ops will not task a CG vessel for an ice escort. JRCC advises if Ginny CR becomes a SAR case he will be taken to the nearest port or a helicopter will take the crew off.
1921z	JRCC calls Ice Ops and requests clarification on their policy for assisting sealers requesting icebreaker assistance. Ice Ops advises that there will be no ice taskings for sealers, only SAR taskings. Ice Ops also advises Des Gros is available for SAR if required and Sir William Alexander is in Sydney to support law enforcement (Farley Mowat), SAR and to provide icebreaker assistance to commercial traffic.
1923z	Sydney MCTS advises F/V Ginny CR's situation has deteriorated and she is at risk of sinking. JRCC will contact the vessel directly on cellular phone to clarify the situation and discuss the vessels' options. The maritime coordinator is dealing with this while trying to clarify the Ice Ops position. Note this call is recorded at end of the 1921z call to Ice Ops.
1930z	JRCC calls F/V Ginny CR on cel phone. The skipper confirms that he can still steer but when moving in ice the rudder box leaks and his vessel is in danger of sinking. They are taking on a lot of water but the pumps are keeping up for now but if the rudder lets go the vessel will sink. JRCC advises that the vessel will be escorted or towed towards the nearest safe port which could be Neil's Harbour or Sydney but the skipper requests assistance towards the ice edge in the direction of the Magdalen Islands. The Maritime Coordinator explains that if his situation worsens while under escort, the icebreaker may have to take him all the way to the Magdalen Islands resulting in one less CG resource in the

	vicinity of the rest of the sealing fleet. JRCC will look at the situation and advise the skipper what assistance will be provided.
2007z	Sydney MCTS advises F/V Madelinot Warlord is requesting an ice escort. The vessel is taking on some water through his stuffing box but is in no immediate danger.
2009z	JRCC advises CG Regional Operations Centre (ROC) that due to an increase in requests for assistance the CCGS Sir William Alexander will probably be tasked by JRCC for sealers in the Northern Cape Breton area. ROC advises that CCGS George R Pearkes may be passing through the area and could assist too if required.
2024z	JRCC tasks CCGS Des Groseilliers to proceed and assist F/V Ginny CR.
2026z	JRCC Advises Ginny CR that Des Gros has been tasked and will assist her to the ice edge. Ginny CR advises that F/V Rough Rider is nearby and will escort him from the ice edge to Cap-aux-Meules, Magdalen Islands. JRCC requests Ginny CR to pass sitreps every 2 hours until secured at Cap-aux-Meules.
2034z	JRCC speaks with Des Gros and confirms the tasking for Ginny CR.
2037z	VCO advises JRCC that L'Acadien II is not happy because Des Gros left him to help someone else. JRCC requests VCO contact Des Gros and get her position earlier in the day
2047z	VCO advises Des Gros position earlier was 46 54N 59 58W.
2113z	JRCC requests VCO get the cel phone number of Madelinot Warlord. JRCC needs to make sure that he is willing to be towed or escorted to Sydney before tasking CCGS Sir William Alexander.
2118z	JRCC advises Madelinot Warlord that CCGS Sir William Alexander will be tasked to escort his vessel towards Sydney. Madelinot Warlord advises that L'Acadien II is nearby and needs assistance. JRCC will check on his status and get more information.
2124z	JRCC advises Ice Ops of potential problems with Madelinot Warlord and other vessels in Sydney Bight due to ice conditions and wind forecasted to come northeast. Ice Ops is not aware that Des Groseilliers is east of Cape North, Cape Breton assisting the sealing fleet.
2129z	JRCC advises VCO that SWA will be tasked to assist Madelinot Warlord and requests VCO get further details on L'Acadien II. VCO advises that L'Acadien II has been in contact with Ice Quebec for a couple of days and they are responsible for him. JRCC will follow up with Ice Quebec. As a result, JRCC will not task SWA to assist L'Acadien II until they have talked to Ice Quebec and gathered more information on the situation and have a complete picture of the vessel's status.
2133z	Ice Quebec advises they have no information on F/V L'Acadien II and did not task the Des Gros to assist her. He was talking to the Commanding Officer of Des Gros earlier in the day about another issue and was advised that the skipper of L'Acadien II is furious that he is being left while someone else (Ginny CR) is being assisted.
2139z	JRCC calls Des Gros, who confirms that they could not fix the problem onboard L'Acadien and departed the scene when tasked to assist the Ginny CR. Ice in the area was 9/10's coverage of fairly heavy ice with no pressure. Des

	Gros confirms L'Acadien II cannot steer so is unable to make her own way through the ice. JRCC asks why they left L'Acadien II without telling JRCC? Des Gros advises they had no orders to assist her and she was in no immediate danger at the time. She was in approximate position 46 52N 060 02'W.
2148z	JRCC calls SWA's officer of the watch and tasks SWA to assist F/V Madelinot Warlord. SWA is also tasked to assist F/V L'Acadien II. JRCC advises she is having steering problems and can't make way in the ice so SWA may have to tow the vessel or take the crew off. More details will follow.
2241z	VCO advises F/V Wendy and Cora, in the vicinity of the F/V Madelinot Warlord and F/V L'Acadien II, is requesting an escort. The vessel has no mechanical problems but the ice pressure is increasing and the skipper requests SWA assist his vessel while in the area. JRCC requests VCO establish communications with F/V L'Acadien II to get more details on the vessel and her situation. JRCC also requests confirmation that she still requires a tow and is willing to come south towards Sydney with SWA. VCO advises they have not worked the L'Acadien II and believe all communications have been done through Ice Quebec. VCO is presently working six vessels in the area at this time. JRCC requests VCO ascertain the number of boats in the Madelinot Warlord's area as the situation could become serious based on the ice and wind forecast.
2247z	JRCC calls Ice Ops, but the Ice officer is off duty and as per normal operating procedure the ROC staff would relay all information to the duty ice officer. JRCC passed the request from F/V Wendy and Cora for an escort due to increasing ice pressure. ROC reconfirms that there will be no ice escorts, only SAR taskings but they will pass the request along.
2249z	Sydney MCTS has contacted L'Acadien II. She still has steering problems and requires CG assistance. The vessel's cel phone number is passed with the advice that the skipper only speaks French.
2253z	Note this is the only direct comms between F/V L'Acadien II and JRCC. JRCC calls L'Acadien II on cel phone and speaks to the captain in French. The captain confirms his position, a description of his vessel, six people onboard, that he has steering problems and requires a tow. CCGS Des Groseillers advised him earlier in the day to contact Sydney MCTS and make a formal request for an escort to the Magdalen I. JRCC advises that SWA has been tasked and should be on scene in approximately 3 hours 30 minutes. It is planned to tow L'Acadien II to the nearest safe haven, which is Sydney, but the captain is concerned that there may be no facility to take his boat out of the water and make repairs. JRCC advises the captain to contact Sydney MCTS for assistance with contacting local boat repair facilities.
2309	SWA calls JRCC and advises they are outbound from Sydney Harbour. JRCC briefs the C/O on the latest details and it is agreed that the vessels will be brought south towards Sydney/North Sydney.
2315	JRCC expresses concern to the ROC about the forecasted ice and weather conditions and the fact that a Provincial Airlines surveillance flight indicates at least 20 sealing vessels in the area, Des Gros and SWA are both on SAR

	tasking so another vessel may be required. ROC responds that CCGS George R Pearkes is heading into the Gulf of St Lawrence/Magdalen Islands area for Sunday and this may be the most suitable resource for JRCC to use. She is doing a harbour breakout and some Marine Navigation Services work before proceeding into the Gulf of St Lawrence. Louis S St Laurent is off Chaleur, Quebec escorting shipping and Edward Cornwallis is north of Anticosti Island standing by for shipping. There are ice and security issues in the Sydney area and the RCMP ERT may be put onboard SWA on Sunday.
2335	JRCC contacts CCG Auxiliary Everett Andrews for information on shipyards in the North Sydney area. He suggests a local boat hauling company. The CGA member expresses concern because Sydney Harbour is filling with heavy drift ice.
2339	Des Gros advise they are enroute to assist the Ginny CR and will advise when they commence the escort towards the Magdalen Islands.
2339	JRCC calls the local boat hauler to check on the availability of the equipment to assist L'Acadien II but left a message on the answering machine.
2341	JRCC calls ROC to discuss difficulties connecting to the SWA Fax machine and sending a hardcopy-tasking message.
2346	JRCC requests VCO pass the boat hauler info to L'Acadien II.

Saturday March 29th	
0018	Des Gros commences escort of F/V Ginny CR towards the ice edge and the Magdalen Islands.
0109	SWA advises on scene at L'Acadien II and Madelinot Warlord and is aware of the Wendy and Cora stuck in the ice ten miles to the north. C/O of SWA thinks she should be escorted due to heavy ice and forecast winds. JRCC explained the earlier phone call with CG ROC/Ice Ops but agreed to establish a conference call between JRCC, SWA and Ice Halifax. During this call it was agreed that SWA would assist Wendy and Cora. SWA advises they will probably pick up Wendy and Cora first and then come back and pick up L'Acadien II then Madelinot Warlord and take them to North Sydney. SWA expressed concern about how the L'Acadien II will tow with a rudder problem and plans on having a short towline, perhaps close enough for L'Acadien II to contact SWA's stern.
0314z	CCGS Sir William Alexander calls JRCC to request a SAR tasking number. A discussion took place about problems faxing the tasking form and SWA officer of the watch advises they will attempt to transfer the fax machine back up to the bridge to fix the problem.
0327z	0300z sitrep from SWA advises they have commenced the tow of L'Acadien II in position 46 52.0N 060 10.2W and now enroute to assist Madelinot Warlord. Winds NNW @ 5/10kts, temperature -2c, overcast sky with clear visibility.
0413z	CCGS Sir William Alexander advises that L'Acadien II struck a piece of ice and capsized. F/V Madelinot Warlord rescued two crewmembers but the other four are still missing. SWA and Madelinot Warlord are standing by the capsized vessel, there is banging coming from inside the overturned hull and SWA is getting ready to launch the fast rescue craft to rescue anyone who comes to the surface. Total ice coverage is 6/10s but they are sitting in a pool of open water now. JRCC will task a Cormorant helicopter and have Sydney MCTS issue a mayday relay. .
0415z	JRCC calls SWA and requests an updated position of the incident for the mayday relay - 46 49.18N 060 03.9W. The hull is still afloat and they can hear knocking from inside.
0415z	Request Mayday relay broadcast from Sydney MCTS.
0417z	Standby Hercules and Cormorant aircraft from 413 Squadron, Greenwood are paged after a discussion and agreement that 4 rescue divers would be required on the scene.
0419z	Ice Ops Halifax advised.
0420z	Cormorant crew briefed and tasked.
0424z	JRCC advises SWA of attempts to contact divers in Sydney but it is improbable that a dive rescue team can be found who can assist in these conditions. Hercules R307 will have divers on board but their eta is 3 hours from now and it is uncertain if they can para drop their equipment then jump themselves into the ice floes. SWA confirms that the hull is still floating and it was agreed that they should attempt to secure it alongside and consider cutting into the hull due to limited cold water survival time.

	Commanding Officer of SWA advises that the fishing vessel hit a piece of ice and capsized despite SWA engines being put astern and cutting the tow line as quickly as possible.
0429z	First call received from Canadian Press requesting information about the seal fishery in general but not the L'Acadien II. They will call back in an hour.
0430z	VCO calls JRCC with responses to the mayday relay. The bulk carrier Magdeleine and the Marine Atlantic Ferry Lief Erickson responded but they are not tasked as there is no additional assistance they can provide with respect to rescuing the four trapped crewmembers. There has been no response to the broadcast from commercial divers.
0430z	JRCC briefs RJOc Atlantic and requests information on any military assets in the area. RJOc advises there are none.
0431z	Message left with DND Public Affairs for briefing in anticipation of press inquiries.
0434z	JRCC Officer in Charge (OIC) briefed.
0434z	JRCC CG Regional Supervisor Marine SAR (RSMS) briefed.
0435z	Hercules aircraft commander (A/C) is briefed and advises they plan to proceed directly to the scene and deploy the SAR Techs/divers by parachute, if possible. Their eta on scene is two hours and thirty minutes from now. The SAR Techs will have to wait until they get on scene before making a decision to jump and dive.
0440z	JRCC calls SCUBA TECH, a commercial dive company based in Sydney. They are presently in Halifax but advise Cape Breton Regional Police (CBRP), Glace Bay Fire Department and North Sydney Fire Department have dive teams.
0443z	VCO calls with another response to Mayday Relay. M/V Federal Venture is a bulk carrier, 5 hours away but has no divers so she is not tasked.
0444z	JRCC calls CBRP dispatch and requests the dive team. The dispatcher advises it will take a long time to get on scene, probably several hours, but they will call out the sergeant to discuss the situation.
0445z	Called CCG Auxiliary member in Neil's Harbour in an attempt to contact any local divers and left message to call JRCC.
0448z	CBRP dive team leader briefed. Their dive team would have to be called out plus two hours and thirty minutes to get to Neil's Harbour. They will muster the team, determine a time line and call back with details.
0455z	RJOc is requested to have the Fleet Diving Unit Duty Officer call JRCC.
0458z	VCO advises JRCC that when they spoke to L'Acadien II earlier in the day they were told there were four persons onboard (this was confirmed to be incorrect). They also passed the name of a local diver who may be able to assist.
0459z	JRCC contacts a CCG Auxiliary member in Dingwall. His wife advises he is seal hunting but she will have him call JRCC.
0501z	CBRP dive team advises JRCC they do not have the equipment to do this work and cannot assist.
0501z	VCO passes contact numbers for North Sydney Fire Department.
0503z	JRCC calls SWA and provides an update on the latest efforts to locate divers. Commanding officer advises they have secured the after part of the hull but the ice conditions are preventing the placing of another strap around the forward part and stabilizing it for a rescue attempt. A discussion took place about the available

	options – wait for divers or cut into the hull. It was agreed that given the cold water, time for divers to arrive on-scene and risk that the hull could sink in the meantime, it was best to attempt a rescue by cutting into the hull.
0504z	Fleet Dive Unit Atlantic advises JRCC they have no resources in the area and it would take too long to get a Halifax based team to the scene.
0506z	JRCC contacts North Sydney Fire Department, they do not have a dive team but Sydney Mines Fire Department does.
0507z	VCO advises JRCC the F/V Sanbrendora and another 6 fishing vessels are proceeding to the area to provide assistance. They are cautioned by JRCC to proceed only if they can assist in the recovery of the boat and missing crew. They could put themselves in danger and complicate the situation by proceeding under the present conditions.
0518z	Hercules aircraft commander discusses with JRCC whether the best option is to jump and dive as soon as they arrive on scene or to wait for the Cormorant and go as a four-person dive team. It was decided that given the time restraints it was best to jump and dive as soon as possible.
0526z	SWA calls JRCC and advises that they are preparing equipment to cut into aluminum hull. There is no one on the hull yet as they are still having problems securing it alongside. There was a discussion and agreement that the L'Acadien II crew is probably trapped in the forward part of the vessel and that is where the cutting should begin. There is still banging from the hull at this point.
0529z	CG ROC requests JRCC take the lead for media requests with respect to the SAR operation and the ROC will handle all other media requests. ROC is also briefed on the latest information from the scene.
0530z	CG Regional Supervisor Maritime SAR arrives in the JRCC.
0531z	Canadian Mission Control Centre advises that the COSPAS/SARSAT monitoring system appears to be malfunctioning so distress alerts may not show up on the JRCC system. The system will be restarted and JRCC requests that USMCC be contacted to maintain a guard for alerts in the Canadian area during this period.
0532z	JRCC contacts Cape Breton Regional dispatch for info on the Sydney Mines dive team.
0535z	JRCC calls the F/V Madelinot Warlord and confirms the two survivors onboard his boat are in good shape. The survivors are Bruno Pierre, son of the skipper and deckhand Claude Deraspe. It is also confirmed that the four remaining persons onboard L'Acadien II were asleep in their bunks in the forward part of the vessel when she capsized and are definitely trapped inside. Missing is skipper Bruno Bourque, Carl Aucoin, Gilles Leblanc and Marc-Andre Deraspe, all from the Magdalen Islands. No one has spoken to the families so JRCC will have the Magdalen Islands Surete du Quebec (SQ) begin a next of kin (NOK) notification process. JRCC advises that SWA is planning to cut into the hull but the skipper of Madelinot Warlord has concerns that she will sink if they do that but notes that the hull appears to have a lot of air trapped inside as she is floating fairly high in the water.
0536z	JRCC briefs the Sydney Mines Dive Team. They will proceed to Neil's Harbour with a five-person team to provide assistance as required and will call back with an ETA.