



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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02-13

BOW RIDING IN HEAVY WEATHER

Don't get bounced!

Several passengers standing in the bow pulpit of a 106' inspected whale watching vessel were injured while underway. The vessel struck a large wave, its bow rose and slammed down causing the passengers in the pulpit to lose their balance and fall to the deck. Injuries ranged from cuts and bruises to a broken patella (knee) and jaw. Although there were many other passengers on board at the time, only the passengers standing in the pulpit were injured.



The investigation concluded that:

- Proper verbal briefings regarding unfavorable weather conditions were made to the passengers; however, some passengers had disregarded these safety warnings.
- The vessel did not have a policy which outlined operational conditions as to when the bow area and pulpit should be vacated.

The master's judgment is crucial in considering securing access to the bow area when the vessel is operating in less than ideal sea conditions. As the sea state and speed of the vessel increases, the likelihood of the vessel experiencing sudden and erratic motion also increases. These circumstances and passenger demographics should be considered when determining if the closure of the bow area is necessary.

As a result of this casualty, the Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that all vessel owners/operators operating vessels with bow areas open to passengers establish written policy and procedures for vacating the area when operational conditions present risks of injury. The policy and procedures should address the vessel's speed and sea state, in addition informing passengers during the pre-departure safety brief of the restrictions prior to getting underway.

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