

4.1.1 The Disaster of the Herald of Free Enterprise

Formatted: Title

One of the worst maritime disasters of its time was the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise. ~~Herald of Free Enterprise disaster is often referred to as one of the worse tragedies of its time.~~ The tragedy appeared to unfold as a result of the negligence of crew members on board but investigation has shown that there were deeper problems at a more senior level in the company. From the face of it all, the tragedy appears to have been a case of negligence by officials working on the vessel. However the cardinal faults lay higher up in the company. There was company-wide neglect with regard to a suitable safety culture and procedures and standards were not adhered to appropriately. Additionally, employees were not given clear responsibilities and their roles were poorly defined. All of these factors contributed to the tragedy which led to 193 passenger deaths. ~~Social issues such as ignorance towards adopting a safety culture, not adhering to standards and procedures, unclear definition of roles and responsibilities were all faults contributing towards the death of the 193 passengers.~~

Events that Occurred

On the day of the tragedy, 6 March 1987, the sea was flat calm and there was only a light breeze from the East. The Herald of Free Enterprise left Zeebrugge, Belgium loaded with 47 trucks, 3 busses, 81 cars, 479 passengers and 80 crew members. ~~On March 6th 1987, there was a light easterly breeze and the sea was calm. As the vessel departed from the harbour of Zeebrugge, on board there was a crew of 80, 479 passengers, 81 cars, 3 busses and 47 trucks.~~ Upon departure, there was still extra water left in the tanks which should have been pumped out.

Comment [HH1]: I have found this sentence hard to follow which makes it difficult to paraphrase. Can you check it for accuracy and re-word it if necessary?

On the day of the disaster, assistant bosun, Mr Mark Stanley, was responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the boat after he opened the doors on arrival at Zeebrugge. It was his job to make sure that the bow doors were closed before departure but after being released from his duties in dock by bosun, Mr. Terence

~~Ayling, he returned to his cabin and fell asleep, failing to wake up before departure when the 'harbour stations' public address system sounded to alert the crew to take up their posts for departure.~~

~~Amongst several of the crew members directly involved with causing this disaster was the assistant Bosun, namely Mr. Stanley whose responsibility was to close the bow doors. During the call alert for departure the Bosun himself, left the car deck to his assigned station.~~

~~When the call sounded, Ayling went to his departure station, leaving the car deck with the bow doors open. When interviewed after the event he justified his actions describing how 'it had never been his duty to close the doors or ensure they had been closed'. At the enquiry the first officer, Mr Leslie Sabel, described how he left his car loading duties on the car deck to proceed to the bridge in preparation for departure only after he thought he noticed Mr Stanley heading between the vehicles towards the bow doors. Diverting the blame, the Bosun later justified that 'it had never been his duty to close the doors or ensure they had been closed'. Mr. Leslie Sabel held in charge of loading the vehicles, stated that he remained on the car deck until he saw or 'thought' he saw Mr. Stanley weaving his way through the parked vehicles towards the bow doors. He then proceeded to his assigned position at the bridge, ready for departure.~~

~~Going back to the arrival On the day of the tragedy, he opened the doors on arrival at Zeebrugge and then supervised the cleaning and maintenance duties. Released from this by Ayling, the Bosun went to his cabin where he fell asleep. In deep sleep, he was not later awakened by the 'harbour stations' public address call, alerting crew to take their assigned positions for departure from the dock.~~

~~In the aftermath, it was established that Captain David Lewry was not able to see the doors, and hence check if they were closed, owing to a new clamshell design which used a horizontal opening and closing mechanism. The design of the Herald of Free Enterprise was like that of many roll-on/roll-off ferries of the time and was poor. It is important to note that the Herald had new designed clamshell doors, which opened and closed horizontal. Because of this Captain David Lewry was unable to see the doors were closed. There were no dividing bulkheads on board to inhibit the flow of any water ingress resulting in instability which led to the possibility of capsize.~~

Comment [HH2]: Please note, I have altered the order of the original sentences here (bringing the paragraph from below up into a more logical position in the text).

Comment [HH3]: Is this a direct quotation? As it is in speech marks I have not changed it. If it is a direct quotation it needs a reference here. If not, the speech marks should be removed.

~~As the ship left dock and its speed increased to 15 knots, the bow wave at the prow grew until it was breaking over the car deck at an astonishing rate of 3.3 tons per second. Hence, when the ship backed out and increased in speed, an inevitable bow wave began to build up under the ships prow. Travelling at 15 knots, water soon began to break over the main deck at a staggering rate of 200 tons per minute. Like most roll-on/roll-off passenger car ferries at the time, the Herald was a victim of bad design. As the vessel did not have any subdividing bulkheads, water easily flowed from one end to another. There was nothing to stop the water from flowing rapidly from one end of the ship to the other and, after a mere 90 seconds, the Herald of Free Enterprise sank to the bottom of the sea. The ship was no more than 100 yards from shore. As a result the ship became unstable and water poured in, eventually causing the vessel to capsize. The disaster unfolded within 90 seconds, just 100 yards from the shore. Eventually, the Herald settled on the seabed at slightly more than ninety degrees.~~

Comment [HH4]: I have made some small changes to the order of the sentences in this section – for the sake of clarity.

~~A number of passengers who were trapped inside the ship died from hypothermia and 193 people died altogether as a result of the disaster. The open bow doors were quickly identified by rescuers as having been the cause of the tragedy [6]. The final toll of death was 193; several, as a result of hypothermia whilst being trapped inside the ship. Upon inspecting the damage, the rescuers almost immediately assumed that the disaster was a result of the bow doors being left open [6].~~