



Lessons Learned Report 2017-2

Incident:

An RCMSAR Station was tasked by JRCC Victoria to a small vessel aground with 3 POB. Due to the shallow water, underwater rocks, and estimated 3'-4' waves, the RCMSAR FRC could not get close enough to the stricken vessel to pass the tow line. The attempt to float the towline to the vessel was unsuccessful.

The Coxswain, concerned for the safety of the persons on the stricken vessel and the perceived lack of seamanship on-board, placed one RCMSAR crewmember into the water to swim the towline to the vessel, approx. 300' away.

This crewmember was successful in reaching the vessel, but due to the positioning on large rocks, could not attach the line. The crewmember went on-board the stricken vessel and shortly after a wave hit the stern quarter of the boat ejecting all persons, including the RCMSAR crewmember, into the water.

The Coxswain, upon seeing this incident, placed another crewmember from the FRC into the water to assist getting everyone to shore. The two remaining crew on the FRC navigated the boat, approx. 1/4nm to the south, to a sheltered landing spot where one crewmember exited the FRC and walked along the shore to assist the 2 crewmembers and 3 persons and brought them back to the FRC. Everyone was transported to waiting EHS at the closest marina. Crewmembers did not require any first aid assistance nor had any injuries received due to this event.

Issues Surrounding the Incident:

- 1) In accordance to RCMSAR Policy OPS-115, RCMSAR members are not authorized to enter the water during the course of SAR operations, except in cases where wading in calm, shallow water (less than 4 feet in depth) is required.
- 2) Two members of the four-member crew departed the RCMSAR vessel, leaving the FRC without meeting the required RCMSAR crewing standards based on their vessel type.
- 3) Consideration of risk, both immediate and future, was not properly assessed.



Incident Factors:

There were three main factors that contributed to the incident:

- 1) Two of the three persons on the vessel aground were elderly and crew suspected their seamanship and well-being were of concern, which lead to the increased sense of urgency in assisting them.
- 2) Not being able to reach the people easily raised the complexity of the mission by creating an additional sense of urgency.
- 3) Weather on-scene prevented the SAR crew from getting accurate information on water depth and being able to see any underwater rocks, preventing them to get closer to the stricken vessel.

Lessons to be learned:

- All RCMSAR members are not permitted to swim.
- An RCMSAR vessel should always meet the required level of crewing standards for their vessel type.
- Proper use of the GAR Risk Assessment tool to evaluate the risks of an event, both in the short and long term, should always be used in the decision-making process to ensure safety of crew and vessel.
- RCMSAR members should be familiar with RCMSAR Policies.