

M2244

Posted on 20.05.2024 by Adam Parnell

Category: [Superyachts](#)

Report Title Lack of crew in an emergency

Initial Report

A private motor yacht of approximately 40m LOA experienced steering loss due to a loss of pressure on the hydraulic system. The hydraulic system solenoid had broken, and there was no spare solenoid onboard or competent engineer to repair the existing solenoid. The failure resulted in the loss of function for the steering, anchor winch, and hydraulic transom door hatch, all operated by the same hydraulic pack. Due to stormy weather conditions, the vessel nearly ran aground before it reached the nearest safe haven.

Only three crew members were on board, and the owner of this private boat refused the master's request to employ additional crew for a vessel of this size, which, according to industry practice, should be approximately seven people. As a result, the three crew members (captain, motorman, and stewardess) ended up in a near-miss situation, which could have been much worse. Fortunately, using good seamanship, they brought the vessel into the marina using only engines and the emergency steering system.

Comment

It's concerning to hear about the unsafe situation onboard the vessel due to the design and redundancy issues with critical equipment. Relying on one hydraulic power pack for multiple critical functions such as steering, transom door hatch, and anchor winch creates significant risk, especially concerning equipment redundancy, crew size and knowledge.

The crew's skilful averting of a grounding and safe return home demonstrate their competence and good seamanship. However, the inability to repair the solenoid due to the lack of technical knowledge and spare parts highlights a severe deficiency of preparedness.

The recommendation from CHIRP to conduct a thorough risk assessment to determine the appropriate manning levels for a vessel of this size is crucial. Adequate staffing is essential for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of operations, particularly in emergencies.

While the 3-person crew's good fortune and decision-making may have helped avert a grounding this time, this is

not a reliable resource level for future voyages. The owners should take proactive steps to address the underlying

issues and implement necessary changes to prevent similar incidents in the future. This includes investing in equipment redundancy, carrying essential spare parts onboard, and providing sufficient crew training. Failure to do so could lead to potentially catastrophic consequences for the vessel and its crew.

Key Issues

Design – Large superyachts should always have redundant critical spare parts to repair or replace essential equipment. This should be part of the vessel's design and requested by the flag and insurers.

Capability – Ensure the motor yacht crew has the right skills and knowledge to handle an emergency. The current crew level, with their combined knowledge, which managed the emergency, was not a safe number.

Culture/Complacency – Just getting by is not good enough. Safety management must be a proactive approach to assessing potential risks. Just because nothing has happened before is no reason not to take all precautions. Prudent overreaction is always the safest way and should be part of the company's vision for the crew and passengers.



