

MARINE OCCURRENCE REPORT
GROUNDING
OF THE FERRY "JOSEPH SAVARD"
OFF SAINT-JOSEPH-DE-LA-RIVE, QUEBEC
17 FEBRUARY 1996

REPORT NUMBER M96L0017

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) investigated this occurrence for the purpose of advancing transportation safety. It is not the function of the Board to assign fault or determine civil or criminal liability.

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Summary

On 17 February 1996, the "JOSEPH SAVARD" departed the wharf at Île-aux-Coudres, Quebec, at 1502, bound for Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, Quebec. The first part of the crossing was uneventful. The vessel then entered a moving ice patch a few hundred metres from her destination. A few minutes later, the ferry became stuck in a drifting ice floe that the flood stream pushed to shore in a few minutes, and the vessel ran aground before she could free herself from the ice floe. There were no injuries or pollution as a result of this occurrence.

Other Factual Information

Particulars of the Vessel

Name	"JOSEPH SAVARD"
Port of Registry	Québec, Quebec
Flag	Canadian
Official Number	806123
Type	Ferry
Gross Tonnage	1,444.78
Length	62.71 m
Draught	Forward: 4.04 m Aft: 4.57 m
Built	Steel
Propulsion	Two Bombardier engines developping 3,353 kW
Owners	Société des traversiers du Québec Québec, Quebec

At approximately 1500 on 17 February 1996, the "JOSEPH SAVARD" began a run between Île-aux-Coudres and Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive with 23 passengers on board. The tide was high, and the flood stream was still present in the area; visibility was good, and the winds were light from the east. The vessel was under the conduct of the master, assisted by an officer. Both officers had several years' experience on the ferry. To reach the Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive wharf, the ferry had to cross through a moving ice patch. A few minutes after entering the ice patch, the "JOSEPH SAVARD" rode up onto an ice floe that she was unable to break and the ferry became trapped in the ice. Although the main engine was kept at full ahead, the vessel was driven toward the north shore. At about 1525, the ferry ran aground less than half a mile west of the Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive wharf. Attempts to refloat the vessel were of no avail. The Québec Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) was notified of the occurrence at 1632.

After the grounding, five passengers left the vessel, with the master's permission, in a boat designed for ice racing. At about 2200, the other 18 passengers were evacuated by National Defence R-419 helicopter. The ferry was refloated at high tide at about 1615 the next day, 18 February, with the assistance of two tugs.

Hull damage requiring dry-docking was reported.

1 All times are EST (Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) minus five hours) unless otherwise stated.

Analysis

The "JOSEPH SAVARD" was making her ninth crossing of the day, but the master and the officer were on their first trip of the day. When the relieving master boarded the vessel, the master being relieved informed him of the ice conditions that had been encountered during the day. Although ice patches had been present during the day's other crossings, they had not prevented the passage of the vessel.

The Québec Marine Rescue Sub-centre (MRSC) is the organization responsible for search and rescue (SAR) operations in the area of Île-aux-Coudres. As more than one SAR operation may be under way at one time, it is essential that the MRSC be advised as soon as possible after a marine casualty. Fast deployment of resources is the key to success in such missions.

The vessel ran aground at about 1525. Attempts were made to refloat the vessel for about an hour before the Québec VTC was notified of the occurrence. As soon as it received notification, the VTC informed the Québec MRSC of the situation. Prompt notification of the MRSC would have allowed it to pass to the alert phase one hour earlier. This phase places SAR personnel on alert and allows faster deployment of available resources if the passengers, crew and vessel suddenly become endangered.

The five passengers who left the ferry in a boat were members of an ice boat racing team who had just taken part in a race between Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive and Île-aux-Coudres.

Findings

1. There was a moving ice patch off the Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive wharf.
2. The ferry became stuck in a drifting ice floe.
3. The ferry ran aground before she could free herself from the ice floe.
4. The bridge watch was aware of the presence of the ice patch.
5. The Québec VTC was only notified about one hour after the occurrence.

Causes and Contributing Factors

The "JOSEPH SAVARD" ran aground because she became stuck in an ice floe and was driven toward the shore. The Québec MRSC was only notified one hour after the occurrence, thereby needlessly delaying the rescue operation.

This report concludes the Transportation Safety Board's investigation into this occurrence. Consequently, the Board, consisting of Chairperson Benoît Bouchard, and members Maurice Harquail, Charles Simpson and W.A. Tadros, authorized the release of this report on 12 February 1997.

"JOSEPH SAVARD"

The ferry aground off Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive

(Photos courtesy of the Canadian Coast Guard)