

Watertight Door Awareness Fatality File

Watertight door fatality

While at berth, the crew of a small passenger ship were conducting a fire and emergency drill, which included closing and testing the hydraulically operated watertight doors. The Master closed the watertight doors remotely from the bridge. Some minutes later, the chief engineer opened the watertight door to the engine room, but for some reason he became trapped by the door as he passed through the doorway. He remained trapped for more than eight minutes before being found and freed. He was resuscitated but never regained consciousness and later died in hospital. The door closing pressure was later measured to be 1,650 kg.

The watertight doors were normally set in the local-control mode, which meant that they could not be remotely closed from the wheelhouse. At the time of the accident the doors were in the remote-close mode for the exercise, which meant they would automatically close when the user released the opening handle. The crew routinely passed through the watertight doors without fully opening them when the doors were in the local-control mode. This practice was followed when the doors were in the remote-close mode. It is possible that the victim tried to pass through the door before it was fully open, and for some reason (such as releasing the handle) it began closing and trapped him.