

National Transportation Safety Board Addresses Probable Cause of El Faro Sinking and Maritime Industry Recommendations

On Tuesday, the National Transportation Safety Board (“NTSB”) conducted a public meeting addressing the probable cause of the October 2015 sinking of the cargo ship El Faro, one of the worst maritime casualties in U.S. history. The board announced that the disaster was caused by the captain’s decision to sail into Hurricane Joaquin instead of routing a safer course. Contributing factors were: (1) ineffective bridge resource management; (2) poor oversight and an inadequate safety management system by the ship’s operator; (3) flooding in a cargo hold from an undetected open watertight scuttle and damaged seawater piping; (4) loss of propulsion due to low lube oil pressure to the main engine; (5) subsequent downflooding through unsecured ventilation in the cargo holdings; (6) lack of an approved damage control plan; and (7) lack of appropriate survival craft. More information on the accident and investigation is available [here](#).

As a result of its investigation, the NTSB issued a report containing industry-wide recommendations that may impact ship owners and operators in the future and provide valuable insight on future policies and regulations governing the safe operation and manning of commercial vessels. The final NTSB report and recommendations will be available soon.

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