

FORCE BLUE

Summary Report of Preliminary Enquiry

Vessel name: **Force Blue**

Flag: **Cayman Islands**

Manager: **Fraser Yachts Worldwide**

Type: **Motor Yacht (Commercial)**

Built: **2001**

Construction: **Steel**

Length: **56.74m**

Gross tonnage: **1,325**

Date of incident: **24 April 2008 at 07:25h (local time)**

Place of incident: **Barcelona, Spain.**

Type of incident: **Accident to person (fall from height)**

Crew onboard: **12 operational
5 support crew**

Synopsis:

Force Blue arrived in Barcelona on the evening of 23 April 2008 after a short voyage. The yacht berthed alongside in Marina de Port Vell.

On the morning of 24 April 2008 the crew started work at approximately 06:30h on daily housekeeping tasks typical of the harbour routine for this type of yacht. It was decided that it would not be necessary to wash the accommodation exterior, but rather a full “wipe down” would be undertaken to prevent water staining from overnight rain drying on the accommodation.

The second officer and a deckhand proceeded to wipe down the sundeck which is located on the wheel house top. The deckhand was working on the port side of the funnel casing. The second officer was working on the forward area of the sun deck and was unsighted by the deckhand.

In order to wipe down or wash the sloping bridge top an extendible mop is provided. Fully extended this mop is 4.3m in length which is not quite long enough to reach the extremity of the sloping bridge top without leaning over the bulwark (see Figure 5).

It is likely that the second officer made use of the foot rests on the observation chairs at the front of the sun deck (Figure 4) to increase his reach when using the mop. This would have reduced the effective height of the forward bulwark to 0.66m. It is likely that, when in this position, the second officer lost his footing and fell over the bulwark onto the sloping bridge top and over the starboard side of the vessel.

The deckhand reported hearing a cry and when he went to investigate discovered that the second officer had fallen from the sun deck and had landed on a protective metal cage around a pipe in the quayside (Figure 6), a vertical distance of approximately 12m (Figure 2).

The second officer was found to be unconscious and was taken to the intensive care unit of a local hospital. The second officer suffered severe head injuries with other associated trauma and spent several days in a coma. He is now expected to make a full recovery from his injuries.

Preliminary Investigation Findings:

- 1 The accident was not reported to the Flag Administration in the manner required by the Cayman Islands Merchant Shipping Law.
- 2 The yacht was manned in excess of the requirements of the Minimum Safe Manning Document at the time of the accident.
- 3 All officers and crew were found to be properly qualified, certificated and medically fit for the positions held.
- 4 Records of hours of work and rest were maintained onboard and showed all onboard were properly rested at the time of the accident.
- 5 The response of the captain and crew of the yacht to the accident was prompt, professional and appropriate.
- 6 The Safety Management System onboard contained provisions for working aloft, although the work being undertaken at the time of the accident was not considered working aloft.
- 7 The Safety Management System onboard requires risk assessments to be undertaken in accordance with the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seaman. Risk assessments had been undertaken, but had not identified the hazards associated with “over reaching” when cleaning the accommodation exterior.

Actions taken and recommendations:

The Cayman Islands Shipping Registry's Divisional Director of Safety, Survey and Inspection contacted the managers of Force Blue in order to:

- Notify the owner and manager of the actions that will be taken with regard to the failure to report this accident in accordance with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Law.

and to make recommendations regarding:

- Risk assessments in accordance with the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen.
- Safety Management System procedures and other operational controls to mitigate and reduce the risks to seamen identified in risk assessments.

Annex: Illustrations.



Figure 1
“Force Blue” © Fraser Yachts Worldwide



Figure 2
View of height from wheelhouse top to waterline.(approximately 12m)



Figure 3
Forward bulwark on wheelhouse top. (1.145m height)



Figure 4
Step that may have been used to increase reach. (0.485m height)



Figure 5
Extending mop used to clean wheelhouse top (3.4m length)



Figure 6
Protective cage which prevented the second officer entering the water.