



REASSESSMENT OF THE RESPONSES FROM TRANSPORT CANADA TO MARINE SAFETY RECOMMENDATION M05-02

OVATEK RIGID LIFERAFTS

Background

At about 1700 Atlantic daylight time, on 25 June 2003, the fishing vessel *Silent Provider* left Canso, Nova Scotia, in fair weather and visibility, and headed for Petit-de-Grat, Nova Scotia. Approximately one hour later, smoke was seen coming from the engine room doorway. The fixed halon fire smothering system in the engine room was discharged, but did not appear to bring the fire under control. The crew broadcast a Mayday, then deployed the rigid liferaft, an Ovatek 4, into the water.

After donning their immersion suits, the two-member crew entered the water and attempted to board the rigid liferaft. When the first crew member entered the liferaft, a significant amount of water was shipped inside, and the liferaft rolled onto its side. Concerned about his safety, the crew member exited the liferaft. After several unsuccessful attempts to board and stabilize the craft, the crew decided to remain in the water and use the rigid liferaft as a flotation device.

Approximately one hour after abandoning the *Silent Provider*, the two crew members, suffering from mild hypothermia, were rescued by the fishing vessel *Cape Ryan*. The *Silent Provider* later burned to the waterline and sank.

The Ovatek rigid liferaft is currently the only rigid liferaft of its kind known to be manufactured in the world. Two models are currently in production: the Ovatek 4 and the Ovatek 7 (the number following the name indicates the carrying capacity of the liferaft). Both Ovatek models were approved by TC in June 1998 for use on vessels that are subject to the *Small Fishing Vessel Inspection Regulations*, the *Large Fishing Vessel Inspection Regulations*, as well as the *Life Saving Equipment Regulations*. The Ovatek liferafts had been sold primarily to fishers on the east coast of Canada. Of those liferafts sold outside Canada, most were sold in the United States.

Under testing conditions, righting an overturned Ovatek 4 with the hatches open (in the swamped condition) was easily accomplished. However, given that the liferaft is not equipped with a righting line, the user had a tendency to grab the external water pockets for leverage to right the liferaft. An overturned and swamped Ovatek 7, with the hatches either open or closed, could not be righted by people in the water.

Each Ovatek liferaft is shipped with a user's manual and an instructional video that provide information on liferaft use and maintenance, including the proper boarding method and how to



use included equipment. However, the appropriate procedure for righting a swamped and overturned Ovatek is not addressed in either the manual or the video.

The early units of the Ovatek 4 and Ovatek 7 are not equipped with de-watering hand pumps. Personnel using these units are unable to follow the manufacturer's new recommended de-watering procedure for a swamped unit. Furthermore, the owners of these units are unaware of the procedure for de-watering their liferaft since the original videos and instruction manuals do not contain this information.

The Board concluded its investigation and released report M03M0077 on 13 September 2005.

Board Recommendation M05-02 (13 September 2005)

Without safety information about de-watering and righting a swamped Ovatek, and without the proper equipment such as the de-watering hand pump (for owners who purchased Ovateks before this pump became standard issue), owners of Ovatek liferafts will be at greater risk than they need to be if confronted with the necessity to use this equipment. Therefore, the Board recommended that:

The Department of Transport, in conjunction with the manufacturer, ensure that all present and future owners of Ovatek liferafts receive information that will allow users to properly de-water and right a swamped liferaft and encourage all users to practice these procedures.

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Response to M05-02 (28 November 2005)

The Minister of Transport accepts the recommendation. Transport Canada (TC) is working with the manufacturer, Ovatek, to ensure that information on de-watering is provided to all current and future owners of Ovatek liferafts.

The manufacturer will be taking the following action:

- Ovatek has revised its training manuals and videos to put more emphasis on proper procedures when entering the unit and, when necessary, de-watering and righting it. This new training material will be distributed free of charge to all current and future Ovatek owners;
- Posting new graphic illustrations on units to illustrate the above;
- Installing interior boarding strap to aid entry;
- Removing aft handles to discourage improper means of entry;
- Installing hand pumps and securing bailing devices in all Ovateks;
- Advising current owners of dangers of incorrect boarding procedures; and
- Investigating the feasibility of replacing the nylon water pocket arrangement with a permanent fibreglass ballast arrangement similar to that of the Ovatek 7.

TC will follow up with the manufacturer in early March 2006 prior to the commencement of the 2006 fishing season to confirm that the proposed actions have been completed.

As part of the revision to TP 4957, entitled *Marine Emergency Duties (MED) Training Program* and MED A3/A4 courses, TC will introduce special training, where applicable, concerning the boarding of a rigid liferaft. These amendments will be implemented with the new proposed Marine Personnel Regulations in November 2006.

Board Assessment to the Response to M05-02 (19 January 2006)

The proposed actions to address the identified safety deficiencies associated with the righting, boarding and de-watering of Ovatek liferafts, and the distribution of such safety information to current and future owners, if fully implemented, will substantially reduce the risks associated with the use of these rigid liferafts.

The inclusion of special training concerning the boarding of a rigid liferaft as part of the MED training will further the familiarity of the lifesaving equipment and the understanding of the special considerations associated with its use.

The response is considered **Satisfactory Intent**.

Next TSB Action (19 January 2006)

Implementation of the proposed actions by the manufacturer and TC will be monitored.

Response to M05-02 (November 2006)

TC's update, dated November 2006, indicated that it is working with the manufacturer to ensure that information on de-watering is provided to all current and future owners of Ovatek liferafts. In October 2006, TC followed up with Ovatek who has confirmed that the revised training manual has been completed; however, Ovatek is still working on the finalization of the video. TC will continue follow up with Ovatek. Ovatek has added a pump to the equipment and has completed various modifications to the liferaft.

As part of the revisions to the *Marine Emergency Duties Training Program* (TP 4957) and Marine Emergency Duties (MED) A3/A4 courses, TC will introduce special training, where applicable, concerning the boarding of a rigid liferaft. TC will review the syllabus of the Basic Safety Training to ensure that rigid liferafts are addressed.

Board Reassessment of the Response to M05-02 (November 2006)

In December 2006, follow-up with a few owners of Ovatek liferafts indicated that they have not received any information on de-watering.

Therefore, the assessment remains at **Satisfactory Intent**.

Next TSB Action (November 2006)

TSB staff will monitor the proposed actions.

The deficiency file is assigned an **Active** status.

Response to M05-02 (June 2008)

TC's update, dated June 2008, indicated that Ovatek has confirmed that, following a final review, the revised training manual will be printed during the summer of 2008 and the video is expected to be completed by the end of August 2008. The *Marine Emergency Duties Training Program*, TP 4957, includes an item on training concerning the boarding of liferafts. The MED training standards have been revised to cover such issues and course providers have one year to align their courses accordingly.

Board Reassessment of the Response to M05-02 (September 2008)

TC's update, dated June 2008, provided no new information to address the safety deficiency associated with recommendation M05-02. However, follow-up information provided by the manufacturer of Ovatek liferafts in September 2008 indicated a number of actions were carried out to inform past and present owners of Ovatek liferafts to properly de-water and right a swamped liferaft. A new bilingual instruction manual and plasticised poster describing the de-watering and righting procedures were sent to all Ovatek rigid liferaft owners. A de-watering pump was also sent to 134 owners of Ovatek liferafts not equipped with it. Furthermore, the manufacturer is continuing to look at a new way to incorporate internal ballast in the Ovatek 4 rigid liferaft, and a new video that will include the de-watering process is expected to be produced in the near future.

The actions taken by the manufacturer of Ovatek liferafts to provide the safety information and the proper equipment to de-water and right a swamped rigid liferaft will substantially reduce the risks associated with the safety deficiency.

Therefore, the assessment is considered **Fully Satisfactory**.

Next TSB Action (September 2008)

As the safety deficiency associated with recommendation M05-02 is considered rectified, further action is unwarranted.

The deficiency file is assigned an **Inactive** status.