

**REPORT INTO THE
DROWNING OF
MR MATTHEW ARMSTONG
FROM THE
M.V. "MOON RIVER"
ON THE 18th DECEMBER 2005.**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 25th March, 2003 under The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000

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	PAGE
1. SYNOPSIS	4
2. FACTUAL INFORMATION	5
3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT	6
4. THE INCIDENT	7
5. EVENTS AFTER THE INCIDENT	8
6. CONCLUSIONS	9
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	10
8. LIST OF APPENDICES	11
9. LIST OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED	18

1. SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 The “Moon River” (Pleasure Cruiser) departed from the Quay at Carrick-On-Shannon at 00:30hrs on the 18th December 2005.
- 1.2 On board were 61 passengers and 7 crewmembers.
- 1.3 At 00:55hours on the 18th December 2005 a male passenger was reported overboard.
- 1.4 Man overboard procedures were immediately implemented.
- 1.5 Initial and subsequent searches for the man on the 18th December 2005 were not successful.
- 1.6 The body of a twenty-year-old man was recovered from Lough Corry at 14:20 hours on the 19th December 2005.

2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 The “Moon River” has the following principal particulars:

Name: “Moon River”
 O.N.: 403072
 Tonnage: 66 GT 30 Net
 Length: 22.22m
 Breadth: 4.70m
 Moulded depth: 1.35m
 Moulded draught: 0.95m
 Year of Build: 1994
 Engine Power: 191 KW Service Speed 8 Knots

2.2 Vessel description:

Class V vessel plying in smooth water.
 Operated as a Pleasure Cruiser, it caters for scheduled scenic tours and party nights. It is licensed to carry a total of 115 passengers and crew; its licence was current at the time of the incident (See Appendix 8.2).

2.3 The vessel has full bar and dining facilities (See Appendix 8.3).

2.4 Safety Equipment:

The vessel carried safety equipment in compliance with the regulations in force. The vessel carried lifejackets for every person onboard.

One 65-person SOLAS liferaft and three buoyant apparatus capable of supporting 50 persons were carried.

Four lifebuoys were carried. Two of these lifebuoys had lights attached.

2.5 Radio equipment:

VHF radios were carried on board.

2.6 **Manning:**

The vessel had seven crewmembers on board at the time of the incident.

Master

Mr. Michael Brehony who holds a MCA Boatmasters - BML 486 and valid to the 24th of August 2010.

Security

Mr. Dan Mee and Mr. Aidan Carr.

Bar Staff

Mr. Kenny Murtagh and Mr. Nigal Murtagh

Floor Staff

Mr. Rory O’Connor and Ms. Tanya O’ Loughlin

2.7 The vessel was manned adequately for the voyage being undertaken.

3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

The “Moon River” carried out no voyages on the 17th December 2005.

- 3.1 A routine Saturday night cruise was planned departing from the quay Carrick on Shannon at 00:30 hours on the 18th December 2005.
- 3.2 CCTV coverage showed the deceased boarding the “Moon River” at approximately 00:15 hours on the 18th December 2005.
- 3.3 At 00:30 hours on the morning of the 18th December 2005 the “Moon River” departed from the quay with 61 passengers on board.
- 3.4 Seven crewmembers were also on board.
- 3.5 The water temperature was about six degrees Celsius and the air temp was about five degrees Celsius.
- 3.6 The deceased was dressed in a shirt and jeans.
- 3.7 Clear conditions prevailed at the time of the incident.

4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 At 00:55 hours on the 18th December 2005, the alarm was raised that there was a man overboard. He was subsequently identified as Mr. Mathew Armstrong.
- 4.2 Mr. Armstrong was last seen at the after end of the vessel on the port side.
- 4.3 A member of the crew (Mr. Rory O'Connor) was standing on the opposite side of the vessel at the after end and he alerted the Master of the vessel.
- 4.4 The Master took the engines out of gear.
- 4.5 The position was marked by the crew with a lifebuoy. This lifebuoy did not have a light attached.
- 4.6 The crew carried out a search of the area aided by a searchlight on the bow of the "Moon River".
- 4.7 The local Gardai and Civil Defence Unit were informed of the incident by mobile phone.
- 4.8 The search continued by the "Moon River" for approximately 35 minutes.
- 4.9 The "Moon River" returned to the quay at Carrick on Shannon at 01:50 hours on the 18th December 2005.

5. EVENTS AFTER THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 The local Garda met the vessel on its arrival at the quay in Carrick on Shannon.
- 5.2 Passengers who witnessed the incident were questioned and all other passengers disembarked.
- 5.3 The Garda took possession of Mr. Armstrong's shoes as evidence.
- 5.4 Further search was carried out by the Civil Defence rib that was directed to the scene by one of the crew (Mr. Kenny Murtagh).
- 5.5 This search concluded at approx 04:30 hours on the morning of the 18th December 2005.
- 5.6 The search continued with the Coast Guard Helicopter and a large force of Garda, and the Garda sub-aqua divers on the morning of the 18th December 2005.
- 5.7 The local Civil Defence unit and Lough Ree sub aqua club divers joined these.
- 5.8 Mr. Armstrong's body was recovered at 14:20 hours on the 19th December 2005 in less than 4 meters of water.
- 5.9 The deceased was brought to Sligo General Hospital on the 19th December 2005 and was dead on arrival.
- 5.10 An autopsy was carried out on Mr. Matthew Armstrong at the request of the Coroner, Dr. Des Moran.
- 5.11 The autopsy was carried out by Dr. Clive Kilgallen.
- 5.12 As a result of this examination, in the opinion of the above, death was due to fresh water drowning.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The incident was recorded on the vessel's CCTV system. The footage, which is held by the Gardai and reports to show the deceased taking off his shoes, say something to a friend, run for the port side rail at the after end of the vessel and jump overboard. The rail at this point is over one metre high. (See photographs at Appendix 8.1)
- 6.2 The deceased jumped in the cold fresh water as opposed to entering the water slowly and this would result in fast wetting of the skin and thus the rate of stimulation of the skin cold receptors.
- 6.3 The autopsy report confirmed the presence of alcohol in the deceased and the fact that he had not eaten recently. Both factors might have led the deceased to feel less discomfort from the cold and less aware of the danger of entering the cold water.
- 6.4 The initial response to entering such cold water is "COLD SHOCK" (This term is used to describe the initial response of a victim, unused to cold water after sudden immersion.) and can result in incapacitation and drowning in the first two to three minutes. (See Appendix 8.4)
The result of cold shock is initial deep gasping, uncontrollable rapid breathing, panic and a large increase in both heart rate and blood pressure.
The dangers of cold shock are the inhalation of water, drowning and stroke or heart attack.
The intensity of the cold-shock is determined by the temperature, method of entering the water, clothes worn etc.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Masters and crew of Passenger vessels are recommended to carry out an assessment into the recovery of a person in the water and if necessary to provide extra equipment to aid the search and recovery.
- 7.2 Rescuers are not recommended to enter the water to affect rescue as they risk becoming a casualty themselves due to drowning or hypothermia.
- 7.3 The dangers of Cold Shock (As illustrated in the attached Booklet by the “The rish Water Safety”) to be included in safety announcements by vessels operating in cold waters.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- 8.1 Photographs.
- 8.2 Copy of Passenger Certificate issued on the 14th March 2005.
- 8.3 Copy of brochure for the vessel “Moon River”.
- 8.4 Copy of Irish Water Safety Booklet on Cold Shock and Hypothermia.

APPENDIX 8.1

Appendix 8.1 Photographs





Appendix 8.2 Copy of Passenger Certificate issued on the 14th March 2005.

Department of Communications, Marine
and Natural Resources



Certificate No. 103/2005

PASSENGER CERTIFICATE CLASS V FOR A CLASS V VESSEL PLYING IN SMOOTH WATER

NAME OF VESSEL **Moon River**
NAME OF OWNER **Carrick-on-Shannon Marine Development Co. Ltd.**

<i>Limits beyond which vessel is not to ply</i>	<i>Number of Passengers and Crew</i>		
	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Total</i>
Shannon-Erne Waterway, between Athlone and Ballyconnell including Lough Key.	110	5	115

Equipment which must always be kept on board in good order and ready for immediate use:-

3 Buoyant apparatus capable of supporting 50 persons.	2 Boat hooks, painter and heaving line.
1 Inflatable liferafts capable of supporting 65 persons.	2 Fire Pumps.
Nil Boats capable of accommodating Nil persons.	2 Fire hoses and 2 Nozzles.
4 Lifebuoys.	7 Fire Extinguishers.
127 Lifejackets. (116 Adult + 11 Children)	Nil Fire Buckets.
Buoyant smoke signals.	2 Bilge Pumps.
Approved means of making sound signals.	Nil Bailers and Nil Buckets.
A compass. An anchor and cable.	Line Throwing Appliance Type: Nil.
Navigation Lights.	A box containing sand and a scoop.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Acts relating to the survey of passenger vessels have been complied with, and that this vessel is fit to ply within the limits and with the number of passengers stated above.

This certificate, unless previously cancelled, remains in force until the **8th** day of **February 2006**

For the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources

An Officer authorised in this behalf by the said Minister

This certificate is issued subject to the following special conditions and may be cancelled if any of them is infringed:-

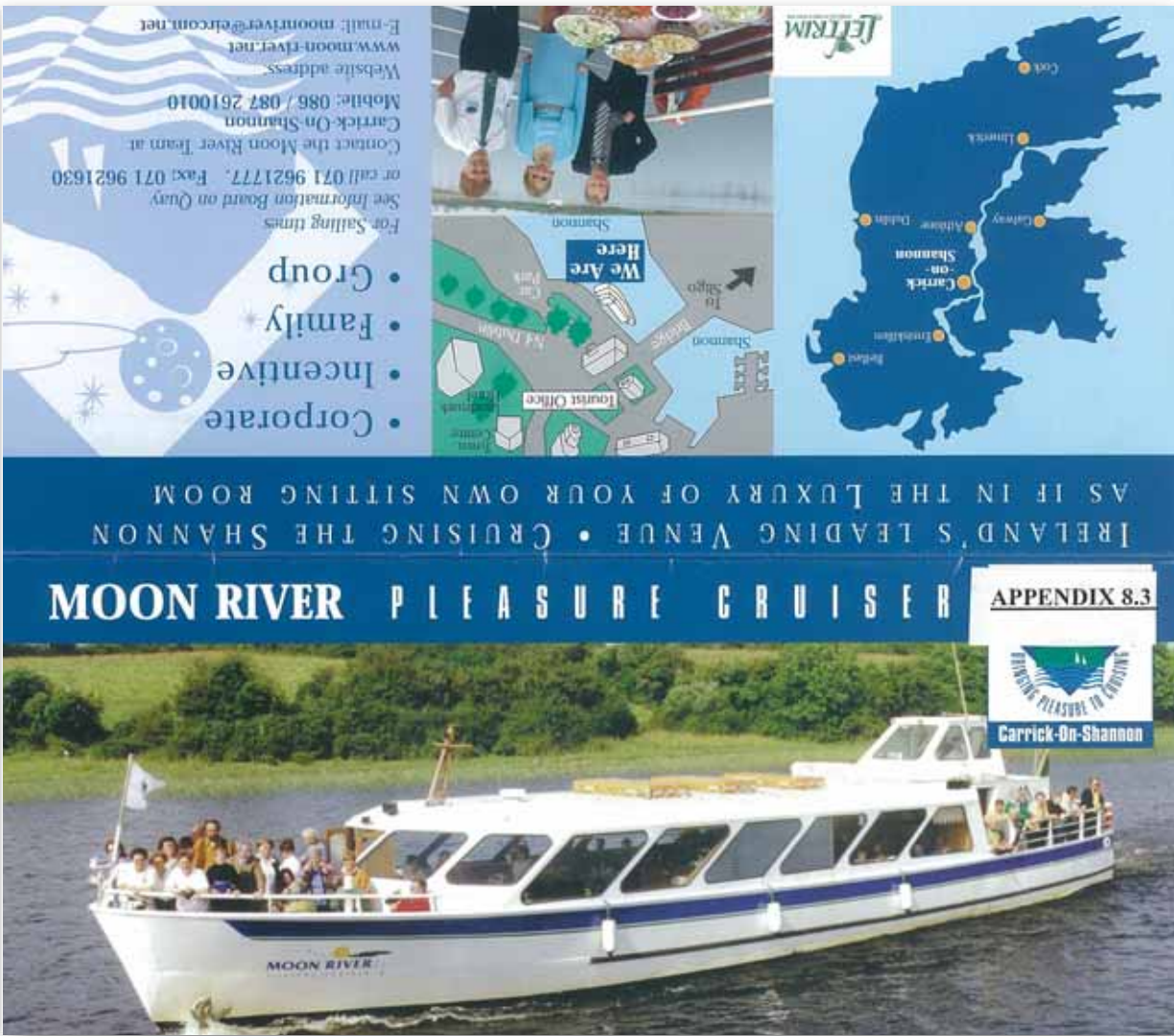
1. The vessel must not be used to tow another boat or craft except in an emergency.
2. The vessel must not carry loose petrol in any circumstances.
3. The vessel must be kept clean and free from oil refuse and the fire-extinguishing equipment must be kept in an efficient condition.
4. The Marine Survey Officer of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources must be notified if the man in charge of the boat is changed.
5. All Regulations and Instructions of the Local Authority must be obeyed.

NOTES:


One of these duplicate certificates must be put up in a conspicuous part of the vessel where it can be seen by all persons on board.
The vessel must not carry more than the approved number of passengers.
If (a) an accident occasioning loss of life or serious injury or (b) any material damage in the hull or machinery affecting the vessel's seaworthiness or efficiency or (c) any alteration or renewal of the vessel's hull, machinery or equipment which may affect its seaworthiness or efficiency occurs, the Marine Survey Office must be notified in writing within 24 hours.
If the vessel is transferred to a new owner the certificate will immediately lapse. It may be renewed if the vessel is found to be in a satisfactory condition and if the new owner satisfies the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources that he will comply with all the above conditions.
Owners and Masters who do not comply with all of the above requirements are liable to heavy penalties under the Merchant Shipping Acts.

Dated this 14th day of March 2005

Appendix 8.3 Copy of brochure for the vessel “Moon River”.



Appendix 8.3 Copy of brochure for the vessel “Moon River”.








Come for a relaxing trip with us on the MOON RIVER Pleasure Cruiser.

All Trips depart quay side, Carrick-on-Shannon. MOON RIVER seats 110 passengers and offers a full bar facility, tea/coffee with your choice of tasty confectionery.

Arrangements made for Buffet meals.

You will enjoy your cruise whether part of a group, with your family and friends, or by yourself.

With it's Luxury Saloon, Cabaret Floor, Full Bar Service and Dedicated Crew, MOON RIVER is the ideal venue for Shannon River sight seeing and entertainment.

Come join us on a MOON RIVER scheduled scenic tour or Party Night.

MOON RIVER may also be chartered for a variety of special events.

Corporate Entertaining and Meetings, Coach Add-On Tours, Company / Birthday / Club / School Parties / Incentives and Product Launches etc.


Timetables are tailored to suit all requirements. Contact us to arrange your special event at:

Appendix 8.4 Copy of Irish Water Safety Booklet on Cold Shock and Hypothermia.



APPENDIX 8.4

COLD SHOCK



HYPOTHERMIA

LoCall 1890 420 202
www.iws.ie
info@iws.ie

Introduction

For people not used to cold water (temp. $\le 15^{\circ}\text{C}$), sudden immersion is associated with five problems, either of which may result in death from drowning.

On initial immersion, the shock of the cold water coming in contact with the skin ("Cold Shock") can result in incapacitation and drowning in the first 2-3 minutes. For those who survive this and are unable to get out of the water quickly, progressive body cooling leading to hypothermia will follow in time. The rate of onset will depend on water temperature and the protective measures you have taken to reduce body cooling.

This pamphlet gives advice on how to prevent these conditions in the first instance and what to do if you do find yourself a victim of either.

Cold Shock

The term used to describe the initial response of a victim, unusual to cold water after sudden immersion.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Initial deep gasping
- Uncontrollable rapid breathing, with possible dizziness and pins and needles
- Panic
- A large increase in both heart rate and blood pressure.

Dangers:

- Inhalation of water
- Drowning
- Stroke or heart attack

Prevention:

- Use recognised "open aboard" prevention equipment
- Wear approved lifejackets.
- Wear clothing with good insulating and waterproofing properties.
- Wear Immersion Suits (dry/wet)
- Hold on to some support and do not attempt to swim until symptoms have subsided (approx. 2 - 3min)
- Exit the water as soon as possible.

Follow up:

- Monitor airway, breathing and circulation
- Prevent further loss of heat
- Protect from wind
- Get medical help.

Hypothermia

Following immersion, first, the skin and limbs cool rapidly; then the heart, brain, and other deeper parts of the body cool. Hypothermia occurs when deep body temperature drops by at least 2°C . Body build, body fat, fitness level and types of clothing worn, all affect its rate of onset.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Early dulling of sensation in hands and impaired muscle function
- Violent shivering with blueness around the lips
- Arms/legs very cold
- Muscles stiffness
- Lethargy and disorientation
- Slow and laboured breathing
- Pulse weakens but difficult to feel in any case because of cold

Dangers:

- Impaired sensation & muscle coordination may impair some early vital lifesaving actions involving hands
- Loss of consciousness
- Drowning
- Cardiac arrest
- Death

Note: Do not assume a person is dead; they may only be in hibernation.

Prevention:

- Wear approved lifejackets.
- Wear Immersion Suits over warm clothing.
- Learn cold-water survival techniques (stay afloat with arms by sides and legs together - "HELP" position).
- Get out of water as soon as possible (life raft, upturned hull, or any other refuge in air)

Follow up:

- Prevent further heat loss (enclose in plastic bag)
- Monitor airway, breathing and circulation
- Move victim to shelter and lie flat
- Insulate body and especially the head
- Remove wet clothing if dry replacements are available

If not:

- Enclose body - except face - in large polythene bag or other waterproof material
- Give warm sweet drinks if conscious, DO NOT give alcohol
- Avoid rubbing the victim's body

Facts

- It takes only 15 to 30 minutes in cold water before the temperature of the heart, brain and internal organs begin to drop but skin and muscle temperatures cool far quicker, which may impair some essential early lifesaving actions.
- Children cool much faster than adults because they are smaller and have less fat. Boys usually cool faster than girls.
- Swimming may give a feeling of warmth but it accelerates muscle cooling. The body may produce more heat when swimming but it is also more quickly lost from the arm and leg muscles. Once these muscles cool, swimming becomes more difficult or impossible.
- Harmful clothes will not produce much insulation against cold water, but they will slow down the rate of loss of vital body heat.
- Wearing approved Lifejackets, Immersion Suits and properly fitting Wet suits will decrease the likelihood of hypothermia for all water sports enthusiasts.

Conservation of Heat in Water

Retention of heat in water:

- Avoid swimming if possible; floating or treading water increases the chances of survival. Berman roll by using trapped air in clothes as a buoyancy aid. Better still wear a lifejacket.
- Clothes will slow down the rate of loss of vital body heat.
- H.E.L.P. (Heat, Escape, Lessening, Position) - This position (legs together, arms to sides), may be adopted if wearing a buoyancy aid. It helps slow body heat loss in calm water.
- Immersion Suits: Wet suits provide extra buoyancy and reduce heat loss for considerable time, but dry suits are better for long-term survival.
- Use of floating objects (e.g. buoyant or capped boots) to get as much of the body as possible out of the water, even if the air feels colder you will always cool faster in water.



17

9. LIST OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Correspondent	Page No.
An Garda Siochana	19
MCIB Response	20

An Garda Síochána

Oifig an Choimisinéara,
An Garda Síochána,
Páirc an Fhionnuisce,
Baile Átha Cliath 8,
Éire.

Tel/Teileafón: (01) 666 0000 / 2026

Fax/Facs: (01) 666 2013

Please quote the following ref. number:



Office of the Commissioner,
Garda Headquarters,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin 8,
Ireland.

Web site: www.garda.ie

E-mail: comstaff@iol.ie

Date:

P.A. 2.1.
Your Ref: MCIB/120

Mr John G. O'Donnell B.L.
Chairman
Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2



Re: **Draft Report into the drowning of Mr Mathew Armstrong from the M.V. "Moonriver" on the 18 December 2005.**

Dear Chairman

I am directed by the Commissioner to refer further to your correspondence dated 3 July 2006, seeking comments or observations on the above Draft Report.

An Garda Síochána is in agreement with the recommendations as outlined at page 8 of the Draft Report.

In addition, it is outlined at paragraph 2.4 page 4 that two of the four lifebuoys had lights attached. Perhaps further consideration would be given to including in the recommendations that all lifebuoys carried on passenger craft should be fitted with lights.

Yours sincerely


B CORCORAN
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT
PERSONAL ASSISTANT
TO COMMISSIONER

2 August 2006

Mission Statement:
To achieve the highest attainable level of Personal Protection, Community Commitment and State Security.

9. MCIB Response

MCIB REPOSE TO LETTER DATED 2nd AUGUST 2006 FROM AN GARDA SIOCHANA.

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board notes these comments and will forward any future developments of relevant Regulations to An Garda Siochana for consideration.