

Contractor Fatality

Drowning



Activity: A waterborne security services contract employee working for a second tier subcontractor was acting as line-handler on a 28ft security watercraft. The security boat team consisted of a coxswain and line-handler and was coming in to moor to effect a shift change. The sea state had been rough with constant high winds of 42 mph and 62 mph gusts. As the security craft approached the dock, the line-handler prepared to loop the mooring line around a cleat on the sea level floating dock. The line-handler was holding the wheel house boat rail and was standing on the weather deck. As he stepped towards the dock, his footing and balance became unstable and he slipped and fell into the water. After finding the line-handler in the water, the coxswain took measures to ensure the boat did not crush the line-handler or cause prop wash. The line-handler was not wearing his personal flotation device (PFD), as required, and although the coxswain threw a “Horse Collar” PFD to the line-handler and the line-handler held onto the dockside bumper/chain fender system, he was not able to be rescued before dying from water induced respiratory impairment (drowning). [NOTE: The coroner's report concluded there was no evidence of blunt-force trauma; i.e. the individual did not strike any objects]

Potential Contributing Causes:

- Line-handler was not wearing a PFD when stepping onto the weather deck
- Sea state and wind may have caused an unexpected boat movement
- Coxswain did not throw the life ring, but instead threw a PFD

Communication Point:

- **ALWAYS** wear appropriate PPE (i.e. PFD) when working on or around water