

# Japan Transport Safety Board DIGESTS

JTSTB (Japan Transport Safety Board) DIGESTS

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## Maritime Accident Analysis Report

### Preventing major accidents involving small passenger ships

#### – Are you aware of the characteristics of the operational areas? –

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## 1. Introduction

On April 23, 2022, a tragic accident occurred when a passenger ship sank off the western coast of the Shiretoko Peninsula in Hokkaido, resulting in the deaths of 18 passengers and 1 crew member and the master, with 6 passengers still missing (as of the release of the accident investigation report).

The passenger shipping business primarily involves transporting people at sea, and while the operation styles vary, passengers typically have limited access to information about the safety of the vessel and sea conditions, forcing them to rely on the operator's judgments.

Therefore, passenger ship operators are strongly required to consistently provide safe transport services to passengers, ensuring "transport safety" based on the principle of prioritizing safety.

Moreover, if even a single accident results in passenger injuries or fatalities, the significant social impact raises questions not only about safety management responsibilities but also about management attitude and governance. Therefore, it is essential for passenger ship operators to maintain strict organizational risk management.

In this context, when using small vessels under 20 gross tons (hereinafter referred to as "small passenger ships") for tourist transportation in scenic areas facing the open sea, the structural characteristics of the hull, freeboard height, and wind pressure surface area can make them susceptible to the effects of waves and wind during rough weather, posing risks to passenger safety.

The sinking of this passenger ship off the Shiretoko Peninsula occurred under conditions with strong wind and wave warnings in effect. While navigating during the passage of a cold front, the ship experienced hull instability, causing the hatch on the foredeck to open. This allowed seawater to flow into the bow section, leading to flooding in other compartments and ultimately resulting in the loss of buoyancy and sinking of the vessel.

This digest, prompted by the sinking of a passenger ship off the Shiretoko Peninsula, aims to prevent similar accidents by emphasizing the need to understand and address "**the characteristics of operational areas**"—a key factor in the accident. Drawing on past cases and prevention measures for small passenger vessels, it presents universal safe-navigation principles and lessons.