

# Sample research paper on maritime disasters

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



## Introduction

Ever since man discovered that wood could float in water, he has endeavored to build sophisticated vessels that would make sea travel as safe as possible. However, numerous centuries of innovation have not produced an entirely fool proof vessel. A total conquest of the sea is far from near. It is noteworthy to note in the same breath that sea transport is getting safer and faster, when contrasted against the situation within the last few decades (Abulafia). The pursuit for continual improvement in maritime transport has been sustained by the unending pace of globalization. While there has been a tremendous development in air and road transport, the sea still remains the primary means of intercontinental transport of bulk goods. Cargoes such as heavy machinery, oil, grain, coal, and other minerals are best served by maritime routes. These sometimes link up with railways, inland waterways, roads, and other coastal routes (Corbett and Winebrake).

In the current global economy, maritime transport has to compete with other modes of transportation along factors like cost, time, and reliability. One of the biggest drawbacks of maritime transport is the astronomical losses that can be an experience in the wake of a disaster at sea. Unlike road transport, sea transport will in most cases result in maximum losses of cargo and may even lead to severe threats to maritime ecosystem (European Environmental Agency).

The past two decades have seen a decrease in the number of disasters at sea: however, there are still some notable accidents that have occurred from time to time. While the sea will pose many perils to any offshore activity, maritime disaster by definition will involve water vessels like ships, cruise

liners, or oil tanks. This paper will evaluate some of the notable maritime disasters after 1989. The idea is not to investigate the causative agents, but just to give an outline in passing of these accidents and their significance.

## **Disasters in Chronological Order**

### **1991: Salem Express**

This was a passenger ship that was lost in the Red Sea on December 17, 1991. It was adapted for use as a roll on, roll off ferry for passengers and motor vehicles; operating between Safaga, a port in Egypt and Jeddah. The accident that led to its demise was a collision with Hyndman Reef (Abulafia). The impact with the reef was so severe that it created a hole in the bow, leading to rapid flooding and eventual loss within minutes. It is estimated that at least 450 persons lost their lives in the disaster from an estimated 690 onboard.

### **1994: MS Estonia**

This ferry, previously known as Viking Sally was of Germanic origin. Upon sinking in the Baltic Sea with a cost of some 852 lives; it went down in history as the deadliest peacetime maritime disaster in this Sea. The final disaster report indicated that the ship was fully loaded and the cargo poorly distributed. This led to the ship listing slightly to port at Tallinn, Estonia. The weather was also rough, with winds clocking 15 to 20 meters per second. It was intimated in the report that the accident might have been a cumulative result of human error and bad weather.

### **1998: MV Princess of the Orient**

The loss of this 13, 935 ton vessel was due to a typhoon on 18th September 1998. This Philippine ferry was on a journey from Manila to Cebu when it capsized at noon near Fortune Island. Out of the 388 passengers on board, 150 lost their lives at sea. This makes it one of the most fatal maritime disasters in recent decades (Lance).

### **2000: Express Samina**

This was a passenger ferry built as MS Corse in 1966, in Greece. MS Samina would exchange hands of ownership several times before settling as a passenger ferry. On the fateful Tuesday of September 26, 2000, this vessel left the port of Piraeus in the evening. Aboard were 61 crew members and about 473 passengers. Going at 18 knots, MS Express Samina would hit the reef of Portes islet. The final death toll was placed at 82 people out of the 533 onboard. It is widely believed that this accident was largely to be blamed on the negligence of the crew who put the ship on autopilot (Greek Island Hopping. com). They similarly did little to help evacuate the passengers after the tragedy.

### **2002: Salahuddin-2**

On the night of 3rd May 2002, this ferry sunk in Meghna River in Bangladesh. The total death toll was 450 people. The loss was largely blamed on exceeding the maximum capacity and the poor condition of the vessel. It was carrying almost double its maximum load.

## **2002: MV Le Joola**

This was a Senegalese owned ferry commissioned by the government. It capsized off the coast of Gambia on 26th September 2002. The resultant death toll would be at least 1, 863 people, making it one of the greatest maritime disasters of the last decade. It is also thought to be among the worst non-military maritime disaster, when considered in terms of the lives lost. This ship was of Germanic origin and was used by the government as a ferry, making two trips a week to and from Dakar. On the afternoon of September 26, 2002, Le Joola left Ziguichor to Dakar, one of the many small towns that it made port. It was having onboard an estimated 1, 863 passengers, for a ship designed to carry a maximum of 580 passengers. This precarious condition would lead to the disaster at 11pm when the ship sailed into a storm off the coast of Gambia. The rough sea and the massive weight led to the sinking in less than 10 minutes (Lance).

## **2006: MV Senopati Nusantara**

This was an Indonesian vessel that was lost in a storm on 30th December 2006. Senopati was a built in 1969 by a Japanese company and was primarily used as a passenger liner. It was adapted for use as a ferry, plying from the port of Kumai to Tanjung Emas in East Java, Semarang. This vessel was lost some 40 km from Mandalika Island in Java Sea, killing at least 400 people.

## **2011: MV Spice Islander I**

This ferry built in 1967 as Marianna in Greece and sold to a different owner until it landed in Tanzania as MV Spice Islander I. it was lost on September 9, 2011 on a sail from Ugunja to Pemba Island. This accident had a death toll of

1, 573 while 620 passengers were rescued. From such a huge number of those lost at sea, only 240 bodies were recovered. It was speculated that the accident must have resulted from overloading. The ship had passengers in excess of 800(Kraska).

## **2012: Costa Concordia**

On 13 January 2012, 32 people lost their lives when an Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia partially sank after running aground at Isola del Giglio, Tuscany. At the time of the disaster, the ship was carrying a total of 4, 252 people from across different parts of the world on a trip around the Mediterranean Sea. The disaster was a result of a collision with a reef when the Captain attempted a manoeuvre that was a deviation from the ship's computer-programmed route.

Conclusion

## **Works Cited**

Thiruvananthapuram, P. India Today. 1 October 2009. 08 02 2014 .

Abulafia, David. The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean. London: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Corbett, James and James Winebrake. The Impacts of Globalisation on International Maritime: Past trends and future perspectives. Research. Guadalajara, Mexico: Global Forum on Transport and Environment in a Globalising World, 2008.

European Environmental Agency. " Accidental Oil Spills." 20 December 2013.

European Environmental Agency. 08 02 2014 .

Greek Island Hopping. com. Greek Island Hopping. 27 September 2000. 08

02 2014 .

Kraska, James. Contemporary Maritime Piracy: International Law, Strategy, and Diplomacy at Sea. New York: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 2011.

Lance, Fred. Worst Disasters of All Time: The MV Le Joola. New York: BiblioBazaar, 2012.

Potts, J R. Military Factory. 5 9 2013. 8 2 2014 .