

# Titanic history

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As the Titanic sped across the North Atlantic on Sunday 14th April, 1912, it picked up a series of messages from other ships in the area warning about ice. Captain Smith was firm in his belief that his ship was in no danger, and was urged on by Bruce Ismay the ship's owner, to prove the vessel's speed and reliability by setting to New York earlier than expected. "Full speed ahead," remained the instruction, and although the captain steered the ship 25.7 km (16 miles) to the south before turning towards New York, no other notice was taken of the increasingly detailed reports about ice ahead.

Where did these reports of icebergs ahead come from? From other ships by the use of wireless radio. The use of wireless on board a ship was still a novelty at the time of the Titanic's maiden voyage. Two radio operators were employed by Marconi rather than White Star Liner. Their names were Jack Phillips and Harold Bride. Radio operators spent their time dealing with personal messages and did not need to be on 24 hour duty.

As the Titanic steamed westwards towards the ice it received nine messages - by telegraph and signal lamp - warning of danger ahead. Although not all of these messages reached the bridge the message from the German steamer Amerika sent about 4 hours before the Titanic hit the ice berg, was passed to Captain Smith in person.

The night of 14th April was clear and bitterly cold. As a routine precaution, the lookout men up in the crow's-nest were warned to watch out for icebergs. Because it was such a clear night everyone thought there would be plenty of time to avoid any obstacle in the sea. But large ships at full speed do not turn quickly or easily, and when lookout Fredrick Fleet spotted an

iceberg, at about 11: 40 pm, it was too late to avoid a collision. As the ship approached Fredrick realised that the iceberg was considerably bigger than what he first saw.

The titanic struck the iceberg at a glancing blow on the starboard side (right) of its hull and damaged appeared only slight. The iceberg was supposedly 30 meters over the deck but did little damage to the upper decks. However, below the waterline, and out of sight of the crew on the bridge, the iceberg punched a series of gashes and holes along 76 meters of the hull.

The ship had 42 watertight bulkheads, but only 12 at the very bottom of the ship, could be closed electrically from the bridge. The rest had to be closed by hand. Some were left open, and others reopened to make it easier for the water pumps.

Should a collision occur, the theory was that the ship would still float with two compartment flooded, or even with all four of the smaller bow compartments flooded. However, the bulkheads only reached three meters above the waterline allowing water to slop over from one compartment to another, thereby defeating the purpose of the bulkheads.

At 12: 05 am, 25 minutes after the collision, Captain Smith realised the extent of the damage to the Titanic and gave the order to abandon ship. For the next two hours total confusion reigned. There had been no lifeboat drill since leaving Southampton, and neither passengers nor crew knew where to go or what to do in the circumstances. Many felt it was safer to remain on deck than to be lowered into the freezing Atlantic aboard a lifeboat.

Tragically, not one officer realized the lifeboats could be lowered fully laden.

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Had they done so a total of 1, 178 people could have been saved rather than 706.

As the lifeboats slid down the side of the Titanic, a flurry of activity took place on deck. The radio operators sent out distress signals. Officers on the bridge flashed messages by Morse signal lamps and fired rockets high into the sky to attract the attention of any passing ships. Yet despite all these actions, it was hard for many people to believe that this vast liner was capable of sinking.

In order to attract any nearby ships, Fourth Officer Boxhall fired the fired of about eight powerful rocket signals at 12: 45 am. Each signal sent up at five minute intervals was launched from the bridge and soared 240 meters into the air before exploding into a shower of light.

As the Titanic slipped lower and lower into the water those left on board when the last of the lifeboats had departed were either gripped by a sense of panic or resign to their fate.

As the ship plunged deeper into the sea, the stern rose up into the air, causing a tidal wave of passengers to fall of deck, some into the wreckage, others into the icy sea.

The Titanic met it's horrific ending.

It was Captain Smith's fault

It was the shipbuilder's fault

It was Bruce Ismay's fault

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It was Thomas Andrew's fault

Why did the Titanic Sink?

" We have struck iceberg ... sinking fast ... come to our assistance."

The ship was doomed and it was slowly sliding into its watery grave. But why did the largest, most advanced ship of the century sink?

Recommendations on how a disaster could be avoided in the future.

\* That the provision of lifeboat and raft accommodation on board such ships should be based on the number of persons intended to be carried in the ship and not upon tonnage.

\* That all boats should be fitted with a protective, continuous fender, to lessen the risk of damage when being lowered in a seaway.

\* That in cases where the deck hands are not sufficient to man the boats enough other members of the crew should be men trained in boat work to make up the deficiency. These men should be required to pass a test in boat work.

\* That the men who are to man the boats should have more frequent drills. That in all ships a boat drill, a fire drill and a watertight door drill should be held as soon as possible after leaving the original port of departure and at convenient intervals of not less than once a week during the voyage. Such drills to be recorded in the official log.

\* That every man taking a look-out in such ships should undergo a site test at reasonable intervals.

\* That all such ships there should be an installation of wireless telegraphy, and that such installation should be worked with a sufficient number of trained operators to secure a continuous service by night and day