

Katmai Update - Search Continues For Two Crewmembers

Thursday, 23 October 2008

Anne Hillman/KUCB - Casey Kelly/KMXT

Five people are now confirmed dead in the sinking of the 93-foot Katmai, a Kodiak-based catcher-processor that went missing west of Adak early Wednesday with 11 on board.

Two crewmembers are still missing, and are believed to be wearing survival suits but may not have been in a life raft.

The Coast Guard rescued four survivors yesterday afternoon after they'd spent nearly 15 hours adrift in a life raft. They were taken to Adak for medical treatment. Petty Officer Levi Reed says they were in good condition and had some information about the vessel sinking.

Reed says the Coast Guard received an e-mail from another vessel, the Blue Ballard, suggesting that the Katmai lost steering and may have been taking on water in the lazarette - an enclosed area at the vessel's stern.

The Coast Guard is being assisted by two Good Samaritan fishing vessels, the Courageous and the Patricia Lee, as well as an Alaskan Air National Guard C-130 and Blackhawk helicopter.

The Coast Guard cutter Acushnet is en route and has an estimated time of arrival of 10 p.m. tonight (Thursday).

Poor weather has been hampering the search.

The circumstances regarding the incident are under investigation, and names are being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

The Katmai was owned by Katmai Seafoods of Seattle. A spokesman there said the crew was from the Pacific Northwest. The Katmai was participating in the state pot cod fishery. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game says Henry Blake the third was the ship's skipper.

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