



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

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## Cutter Accidents

*Please note that the following list was first compiled by the Cutter Operations Division in 1990; other entries have been added and/or updated via information provided by other sources, including former crewmen.*

<u>CUTTER NAME:</u>	<u>DATE OF ACCIDENT</u>	<u>TYPE OF ACCIDENT</u>	<u>DAMAGE ASSESSMENT</u>  [Original damage assessment as per Cutter Operations Division 1990 report--if the accident listed is from that report]
<b>Air Partridge</b>	Nov 1947	Towing collision	Moderate
<b>Air Peacock</b>	Nov 1947	Towing collision	Moderate
<b>Air Tanger</b>	Nov 1947	Towing collision	Moderate
<b>Eastwind</b>	19 Jan 1949	Collision	Major, 13 Dead
<b>White Holly</b>	27 Aug 1949	Collision	Minor
<b>Macoma</b>	28 Mar 1950	Grounded	Total loss
		Grounded	Minor



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<b><i>Macoma (2nd)</i></b>	08 May 1952		
<b><i>Sweetbriar</i></b>	11 July 1953	Holed on rock	Moderate
<b><i>Linden</i></b>	10 Feb 1955	Grounded	Minor
1955 -- " <i>Storis</i> ran aground in the Wrangell Narrows, near Petersburg, Alaska. She was then sent to Seattle for major repairs."			
<b><i>Iris</i></b>	19 Oct 1957	Struck submerged object	Moderate
<b><i>Iroquois</i></b>	06 Mar 1958 (incorrect date; see below)	Grounded	Major
"The [above] report was in error. Actual date the <i>Iroquois</i> grounded was 29 June 1954."			
<b><i>Ironwood</i></b>	15 Oct 1958	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Mallow</i></b>	04 Dec 1959	Collision	Minor
<b><i>General Greene</i></b>	07 Mar 1960	Grounded	Moderate



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<b>1960 -- <i>Acushnet</i> &amp; <i>General Greene</i>:</b> "On 7 March 1960 the <i>Acushnet</i> collided with the <i>General Greene</i> when the <i>Acushnet</i> attempted to rescue and prevent the <i>General Greene</i> from going aground. This caused a four foot gash on her port side and a hole under her bow caused by its own anchor coming through her hull after the anchor had been lowered to prevent the <i>Acushnet</i> from going aground while trying to get rescue lines to the <i>General Greene</i> ."			
<b>1960 -- <i>WAL 505 Relief</i></b> sank after the SS <i>Green Bay</i> rammed her while the former was on station on 24 June 1960 at the entrance of Ambrose Channel.			
<b><i>Gentian</i></b>	09 Nov 1961	Collision	Moderate
<b>1962: "<i>Spar</i></b> sank to her main deck in Narragansett Bay in 1962 after striking the bottom just north of Prudence Island, Rhode Island."			
<b>1962 -- "<i>Winnebago</i></b> went aground on Tripod Reef in the west corridor at the entrance of Pearl Harbor at 2310 hours on 26 March 1962. This was . . . due to a navigation error by a junior officer. With the assistance of U.S. Navy tugs, she was eventually refloated and returned to service."			
<b><i>Papaw</i></b>	31 Jan 1963	Collision	Moderate
<b>1963 -- <i>Tamaroa</i>:</b> "In March 1963 the <i>Tamaroa</i> sank while in dry-dock at Bushey's Red Hook, Brooklyn. She was raised, repaired, and returned to service."			
<b><i>Mesquite</i></b>	10 Apr 1964	Grounded	Moderate
<b><i>Ingham</i></b>		Fire	Moderate



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	10 May 1965		
<b><i>Point Glass</i></b>	26 May 1965	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Fir</i></b>	15 Jul 1965	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Cape Carter</i></b>	19 Jul 1965	Collision	Moderate
<b><i>Owasco</i></b>	24 Aug 1965	Grounded	Moderate
<b><i>Walnut</i></b>	01 Sep 1965	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Point Thatcher</i></b>	04 Oct 1966	Struck submerged object	Major
<b><i>Arbutus</i></b>	15 Jul 1966	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Chautauqua</i></b>	20 Jan 1967	Fire	Moderate
<b>1967 -- <i>Yakutat</i>:</b> "On July 6, 1967, USCGC <i>Yakutat</i> WHEC-380 collided with the USN tanker <i>Cimarron</i> during refueling in the waters off Viet Nam, split 14 frames, returned to Subic Bay for repairs."			



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<b>1967 -- Staten Island:</b> "In the summer of 1967 the <i>Staten Island</i> bounced on the bottom while traveling west from Prudhoe Bay after completing a survey of the area...The swells were five foot at the time and soundings for that area were extremely scarce. The charts for that area were still listed as 'classified.' The damage sustained was not major."			
<b><i>Eagle</i></b>	Jan 1967	Collision	Major
<b><i>Resolute</i></b>	10 Jan 1968	Collision	Moderate
<b><i>Avoyel</i></b>	10 Jan 1968	Collision	Moderate
<b><i>Barataria</i></b>	24 Mar 1968	Explosion	Moderate
<b><i>Bittersweet</i></b>	12 Apr 1968	Struck submerged object	Moderate
<b><i>Sauk</i></b>	08 Oct 1968	Grounded	Major
<b><i>Loganberry</i></b>	03 Dec 1968	Struck submerged object	Total loss [incorrect--raised & repaired]
<b><i>White Alder</i></b>	07 Dec 1968	Collision	Sank, Total Loss, 17 Dead
<b>1969 -- Evergreen:</b> "In 1969 the <i>Evergreen</i> had a major engine room fire."			
<b>1969 -- Staten Island:</b> "In 1969 a fire broke out in the transformer vault area amidships, near the EM shop, on board the <i>Staten Island</i> while moored in Seattle.			



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The compartment was locked and the duty EM did not have a key. The fire spread into the cork insulation on the hull. This created a smoky mess. The Seattle Fire Department had to use phosphorus rings to cut through the deck, to attack the fire. I do not believe there were any major injuries, but the fire did quite a bit of damage."			
<b><i>Escanaba</i></b>	Jan 1969	Motor burnt out	Adrift, minor
<b><i>Point Verde</i></b>	13 Jan 1969	Fire	Minor
<b><i>Acacia</i></b>	12 Mar 1969	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Southwind</i></b>	15 Aug 1969	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Storis</i></b>	07 Sep 1969	Holed by ice	Moderate
1970 -- <b><i>Edisto</i></b> : "I served aboard the <i>Edisto</i> on Deepfreeze 69-70, it should be noted that while breaking pack ice we broke our rudder shaft and also lost our port screw's fairwater. We were then sent to a floating drydock [for] roughly a month in Wellington, N.Z., and had the rudder stock flown in from Seattle."			
<b><i>Courier</i></b>	12 Jun 1970	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Point Brower</i></b>	13 Jul 1970	Capsized	Moderate



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<b><i>Kukui</i></b>	24 Jul 1970	Collision	Minor
<p><b>1971 -- <i>Staten Island</i>:</b> "In early 1971 the <i>Staten Island</i> struck a submerged uncharted rock. Sustained substantial hull and keel damage. Sailed with pumps running to Melbourne, Australia for emergency repairs, then home to Seattle for dry-dock repairs."</p>			
<p><b>1971 -- <i>Morgenthau</i>:</b> "In 1971 the <i>Morgenthau</i> suffered major damage to its keel and losing both propellers and the sonar dome while on patrol in Vietnam. She was towed back to Subic Bay for repairs."</p>			
<p><b>1971 -- <i>Sherman</i>:</b> "1971 the CGC <i>Sherman</i> while underway departing Boston Harbor for an ocean station had one turbine explode which blew a hole in the side of her hull."</p>			
<b><i>Spar</i></b>	29 Jan 1971	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Duane</i></b>	03 Aug 1971	Grounded	Minor
<p><b>1971 -- <i>Castle Rock</i>:</b> "1971 Operation Market Time: While in a yard period at [Singapore] a sea chest valve on board the CGC <i>Castle Rock</i> was improperly reinstalled, which effectively flooded an entire engine room. Two months for repairs."</p>			
<b><i>Hornbeam</i></b>	24 May 1972	Collision	Major
<b><i>Minnetonka</i></b>	20 Jun 1972	Heater Explosion	Moderate
<b><i>Eagle</i></b>	Jun 1972	Collision	Substantial



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**1972 -- Minnetonka:** "On 20 June 1972, on board the *Minnetonka*, a water heater in the CPO mess exploded, killing one crewman."

The Coast Guardsman who lost his life was EM3 Craig J. Surmeier, USCG.

<b><i>Edisto</i></b>	05 Oct 1972	Collision	Major
<b><i>Jarvis</i></b>	15 Nov 1972	Grounded	Major
<b><i>Sweetgum</i></b>	13 April 1973	Grounded	Minor

**1974-75 -- Burton Island:** "While on Deep Freeze '75, while escorting the USNS *Pvt John R Towle* through the ice pack, the *Burton Island* hit a pressure ridge, stopped, the *Towle* didn't. Left a second notch in the stern. Damage was later repaired in Long Beach, CA."

<b><i>Clover</i></b>	26 May 1975	Grounded	Moderate
<b><i>Basswood</i></b>	18 Oct 1975	Grounded	Minor
<b><i>Ingham</i></b>	04 Jun 1974	Collision	Minor

**1976 -- Ingham:** "June 4th or 6th of 1976 when the *Ingham* arriving Boston rammed the dock almost head on. Required immediate shipyard availability to repair the eight-foot gash in her bow. Repairs to the minor? damage were completed and she steamed





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under a full head of power to catch up with <i>Eagle</i> and the rest of the squadron."			
<b>1977 -- Unimak:</b> "In 1977 the <i>Unimak</i> suffered a major fire and she remained out of commission for a year."			
<b><i>Mariposa</i></b>	21 Nov 1976	Grounded	Moderate
<b>1977 -- Midgett:</b> "1977 fire on board the CGC <i>Midgett</i> . On 30 March 1977 a rack light in a forward berthing area on the 2nd deck caught fire to a pillow and spread quickly throughout the berthing. The fire lasted for over an hour and took the life of one MKC. He died of smoke inhalation."  The Coast Guardsman who lost his life was MKC William D. Gray, USCG.			
<b><i>Duane</i></b>	25 Jul 1977	Shaft Damaged	Minor
<b><i>Dallas</i></b>	10 Aug 1977	Flooding	Moderate
<b><i>Westwind</i></b>	13 Dec 1977	Grounding	Minor
<b><i>Basswood</i></b>	24 Jan 1978	Grounding	Moderate
<b><i>Sagebrush</i></b>	02 May 1978	Grounding	Moderate
		Collision	Moderate



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<b><i>Sedge</i></b>	14 Aug 1978		
<b><i>Confidence</i></b>	14 Aug 1978	Collision	Moderate
<b><i>Mahoning</i></b>	12 Sep 1978	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Cuyahoga</i></b>	20 Oct 1978	Collision	Sank, Total Loss, 11 Dead
<b><i>Westwind</i></b>	01 Feb 1979	Collision	Minor
<b><i>Citrus</i></b>	27 Feb 1979	Struck submerged object	Major
<b>1979 -- <i>Ingham</i>:</b> "On 4 July 1979 the <i>Mary Ann</i> , a suspected drug smuggling vessel, collided with the <i>Ingham</i> ."			
<b><i>Blackthorn</i></b>	28 Jan 1980	Collision	Sank, Total Loss, 23 dead
<b><i>Iris</i></b>	24 Apr 1980	Fire	Minor
<b><i>Jarvis</i></b>	07 Oct 1980	Collision	Moderate



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<b><i>Durable</i></b>	04 Dec 1980	Fire	Minor
<b><i>Polar Sea</i></b>	28 Jan 1982	Grounded(Actually collision--see below)	Moderate
<p>"The <i>Polar Sea</i> entry for 28 Jan 1982 was incorrect. The USNS <i>Yukon</i> collided with the <i>Polar Sea</i> while the latter was escorting the <i>Yukon</i> north out of McMurdo Sound. The <i>Polar Sea</i> was stopped by ice when the <i>Yukon</i> collided with her, causing moderate damage."</p> <p>The third mate of the <i>Yukon</i> corrected the last statement: "Concerning your list of USCG cutter accidents - I was third mate aboard the tanker USNS <i>Yukon</i> when it collided with the stuck <i>Polar Sea</i> in January of 1982. It is rather misleading to imply the <i>Yukon</i> collided with the <i>Polar Sea</i>. The <i>Polar Sea</i> switched off its turbines and decided to operate solely on diesels to save fuel, as they stated the ice was getting thinner. They relayed this to our vessel. Then the ice started to thicken and the <i>Polar Sea</i> requested we maintain a closer cpa as the ice was closing in. Shortly after we closed up, per their request, they went up on the ice and got stuck because it had thickened up again. We went immediately full astern on the <i>Yukon</i>, but due to the narrow channel we were unable to miss the <i>Polar Sea</i>. We shifted the helm at the last minute to minimize the damage to both vessels. This accident was caused by the <i>Polar Sea</i> trying to save fuel, not a simple tanker hitting them. I think that should be made clear in your archives. I was on watch at the time of the incident."</p>			
<b><i>Gallatin</i></b>	18 Jul 1982	Grounded	Minor
<p><b>1983 -- <i>Eastwind</i>:</b> "During her last Antarctic trip (1983), the <i>Eastwind</i> collided with the edge of an iceberg. Hot water was used to melt the edge jammed into the ship's hull. She was temporarily patched and made Sydney. There she was more permanently repaired to make the trip back to Mobile, Al, which she accomplished in 1984. There was no loss of life."</p>			



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<b>1984 -- <i>Westwind</i>:</b> "On 1 January 1984 the <i>Westwind</i> sustained major hull damage in the Weddel Sea on a Deep Freeze cruise." LT Clarence Bonner provided more details: "The <i>Westwind</i> was caught in a pressure ridge, which ripped a 6ft high, 140ft gash down her side, above the waterline. The crew patched it with rubber sheeting until they could get out of the ice, then with plywood, and limped into South America for steel repairs. I was an RM2 at her homeport of Mobile at the time and recall the message traffic well, and had friends on her."			
<b><i>Snohomish</i></b>	13 Jan 1984	Struck submerged object	Moderate
<b><i>Dallas</i></b>	24 Jun 1984	Grounded	Moderate
<b>1984 -- <i>Polar Sea</i>:</b> "The USCGC <i>Polar Sea</i> had a fire in an auxiliary engine space early to mid-July 1984 while in drydock at Todd Shipyard, Seattle, Washington. There were no significant personnel injuries."			
<b>1985 -- <i>Polar Sea</i>:</b> "The <i>Polar Sea</i> encountered a rogue wave off the coast of Queen Charlotte Island in the Gulf of Alaska in [October of] 1985. An MST3 died of head injuries shortly after tumbling head over heels from one end of the bridge to another several times and crashing head first into the helm console. An ensign suffered a broken arm."			
The Coast Guardsman who lost his life was MST3 Bradley J. Galik, USCG.			
<b><i>Chase</i></b>	08 May 1985	Fire	Minor (see below)
Cutter Division originally classified this mishap as "minor" but in fact the fire killed <i>Chase</i> crewman MK3 Nicholas V. Berei, USCG. The fire caused extensive damage and the cutter had to be towed into port by CGC <i>Chilula</i> for lengthy repairs.			
	15 Dec	Collision	Moderate



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<b>White Sage</b>	1985		
<b>Point Franklin</b>	15 Dec 1986	Grounded	Minor
<b>Point Steele</b>	31 Mar 1987	Grounded (?)	Minor
<b>1987 -- Farallon:</b> "The <i>Farallon</i> struck a reef off of the Berry Islands in the Bahamas, 1987-1988."			
<b>Vigorous</b>	1 Jun 1989	Fire	Minor
<b>1989 -- Chandeleur:</b> "The <i>Chandeleur</i> struck a coral head in June of 1989 in the Bahamas. It made its way back to Miami on one screw where temporary repairs were effected (replaced the stbd screw). It then made its way on one screw to the CG yard for repairs. I believe this resulted in the first strut replacement done on a 110'. Damage sustained was: cracked stbd fin stabilizer, bent port and stbd screws, bent port shaft, bent port strut, cracked port rudder."			
<b>Mesquite</b>	04 Dec 1989	Grounded	Total loss
<b>Naushon</b>	05 Dec 1989	Grounded	Minor
<b>Sledge</b>	09 Jan 1990	Grounded	Moderate
<b>Planetree</b>	25 Jan	Grounded	Undetermined



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	1990		
<b>1992 -- Point Harris:</b> "The <i>Point Harris</i> was badly damaged during Hurricane Iniki in Hawaii in 1992. She was decommissioned and sold."			
<b>1993 -- Boutwell:</b> "In [1992] the <i>Boutwell</i> was struck by a rogue wave while in transit to her ALPAT area. The bridge crew reported green water breaking over the pilot house. The wave heavily damaged the RHI, stove in a watertight door, carried away a weatherdeck ladder and a P-250 pump and smashed a porthole in the XO's head."  [This incident occurred on 13 December 1992 as per R. M. EdAngelis (Ed.), "Marine Weather Review [-] Casualties," <i>Mariner's Weather Log</i> 37, 2 (Spring, 1993), p. 76. The <i>Marine Weather Log</i> report stated: "The USCGC <i>Boutwell</i> was on Alaska patrol on the 13th and they were battling 30-ft seas when a 'freak' wave estimated at more than 40 ft crested and broke over the ship, staving in a water tight door and causing other minor damage."]			
<b>1994 -- Polar Star:</b> "In January 1994 the <i>Polar Star's</i> number 1 auxiliary boiler blew up due to a firebox explosion. The burner door almost blew clean off as described in the 1999 accident, and the whole upper end of the boiler's air box ripped open causing approx 100,000 dollars-worth of damage. Due to the grace of God no one was injured...The cause was found to be a contaminated main flame fuel valve. Anyway the crew quickly extinguished all fires and eased all steam pressure from the affected systems. The Seattle Fire Department double checked. The blast had been heard from at least 2 miles away. My boys did everything right that night. I departed <i>Polar Star</i> in June of 1994 just days before light offs on the newly rebuilt number 1 boiler."			
<b>1994 -- Spencer:</b> "In February, 1994, the USCGC <i>Spencer</i> (WMEC-905) experienced a fire in an electronics space on the 02 deck forward of the hanger, days before getting underway for an Atlantic fisheries patrol. The fire was extinguished by duty section personnel and the Boston Fire Department, but not before it gutted the space and burned through an expansion joint and slightly warped the aluminum bulkheads and overhead. The crew of the <i>Spencer</i> had the space cleaned out and assessed the necessary repairs, enabling the cutter to get underway on time. <i>Spencer</i> returned to port nine days later to have the repairs performed and equipment replaced, and then resumed the patrol."			
<b>1995 -- Point Evans:</b> "In 1995 the <i>Point Evans</i> ran aground near Molikini			



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Crater leaving a 12-foot long six-inch deep indentation in her keel and rather large pieces missing from her prop."

**1996 -- *Firebush*:** "The *Firebush* ran hard aground in April of 1996 in Bechivan Bay, Alaska. A M/V attempted to help her off (the M/V ended up running aground herself). She later floated free of the sand she was stuck on."

**1997 -- *Cowslip*:** "The *Cowslip* collided with the M/V *Ever Grade* (Panamanian) in the Columbia River on 15 May 1997. She was repaired and returned to service."

**1997 -- *Polar Star*:** "*Polar Sea* rammed in to the M/V *Green Wave* while tying up to the ice pier [at McMurdo Base, Ross Island] during her Deep Freeze 1997 deployment [early-February 1997]. The *Green Wave* claimed \$300,000 worth of damage to itself, while the *Polar Sea* will wear a 10-foot long crease in its port racing stripe to its grave."

**1998 -- *Polar Star*:** "In early November 1998 the *Polar Star* was southbound, near Hawaii, when one of her boilers exploded the inspection door open. This door nailed a young fireman square in the forehead causing major injuries."

"I was on *Polar Star* Aug-95 to Aug-98. Unless the above was a nearly duplicate incident...this actually occurred in July 98 while heading northbound to the Arctic. I still remember the poor fireman crying out in sickbay after the incident -- he was lucky to have lived. We had to sit in Kodiak AK for several days to rig a donkey boiler so we could continue up north to the Arctic."

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## Miscellaneous:

- The CGC *Spar* ran aground, punching a small hole in her hull in the forward magazine. *Spar* was ordered to sail to the Baltimore, MD, shipyard for repairs. The hole was about the size of 1 or 2 fingers (a lot of us inserted our fingers while the Buoy Tender was up on the ways!) as well as a dent in the hull!
- "[*Confidence*; WMEC-619]. . .while on maneuvers in the Gulf of Alaska near Kodiak we attempted to set an HH-52A down on our flight deck during rough seas. Two seamen secured one of the choppers rails and as the ship rolled the pilot attempted to pull up



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and flipped over the side of the ship and landed upside down in the water. Inflatable rafts were used to keep her afloat and the *Citrus* came out to help a Navy ship raise her. No damage to the *Connie* but the 52A was a mess."

- "The *Cape Fairweather* was hit by a rogue wave that damaged the starboard side of the superstructure, blew out a porthole and smashed the glass in another porthole."
- "CGC *Scioto* sank...in the 79-80 time frame. I have a picture someone gave me back in '99 of nothing showing but the searchlight above the water. The man who gave me the picture said it was hit by an ice flow on the Missouri River near its homeport at the time near Leavenworth and refloated a year later."
- "The *Hawser* ran aground in the early 1980s while exiting the Great Egg Inlet."
- In late-1985 to 1989 when the *Polar Sea* was backing out of her berth at Pier 36 to get underway, her Barber Coleman computer propulsion control failed. This caused all her propulsion diesels to quit, and the cutter had no way to check her sternward momentum. She careened into the pilings alongside Harbor Island and a moored barge. That scrape left the *Polar Sea* with one foot of her stern beat in. The damage remains to this day and has only been continually painted over. The outcome of that incident is that all *Polar* class cutters are required to have two tugs assist each one into and out of its berth in Seattle, no exceptions! The outcome of this incident is that *Polar Sea* is the Coast Guard's only 398-foot cutter."
- "[In the 1984-1986 timeframe the CGC *Planetree*] struck a submerged object in Glacier Bay Alaska while working a temp buoy. Then on the way back out they struck it again, but this time opened up the bottom, which flooded the sewage compartment and main hold. CGC *Woodrush* was asked for all pumps available to be dropped off by an HH-3F. The *Woodrush* was also tasked with getting underway and mooring up beside the *Planetree* to be the food service and bathroom service while patching was completed. Then CGC *Planetree* headed for Ketchikan, Alaska with the CGC *Woodrush* following in case something was to happen. I was on the CGC *Woodrush* at the time."