

1 Problem

What	Problem(s)	Fire, beaching, lack of safety equipment
When	Date	June 15, 1904
	Time	10:00 a.m.
	Differences	90% passengers women and children, more children than adults
Where	Physical Location	North Brother Island, New York City
	Unit/Process/Equipment	Steamship General Slocum
	Work/Task Being Done	Excursion trip
Impact to the Goals		
	Safety	1021 killed (2 crew - Death rate for passengers >70%; death rate for crew <7%)
		180 injured (175 passengers, 5 crew)

On June 15, 1904, a church group headed out for an excursion through New York City's East River on the Steamship General Slocum. Approximately half an hour after the ship left the pier, it caught fire. Despite being only hundreds of yards from shore, the Captain continued to go full speed ahead in hopes of beaching at North Brother Island, where a hospital was located. This served to fan the flames quickly over the entire highly flammable ship, killing many in the inferno. Most of those who were not killed by the fire drowned, even though the Captain did successfully beach the ship at North Brother Island, due to the depth of the water and lack of safety equipment.

Passengers drowned because they were in water over their heads with inadequate help or safety equipment. Passengers were either in the water because they fell when the deck collapsed, or because they jumped into the water trying to avoid the fire. The water was too deep to stand because only the bow was in shallow water and the passengers could not reach the bow. This was due to a poor decision on the Master's part (namely his decision to beach the ship at a severe angle, with the bow in towards the island, instead of parallel to the island, where passengers would have been able to wade to shore.) Note that the Master himself (and most of the crew) were on the bow side of the ship and were able to (and did) jump off and wade to shore. The safety equipment, including life preservers, life boats, and life rafts, was mostly unusable due to inadequate upkeep and inadequate inspections.

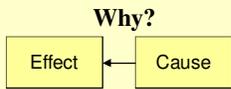
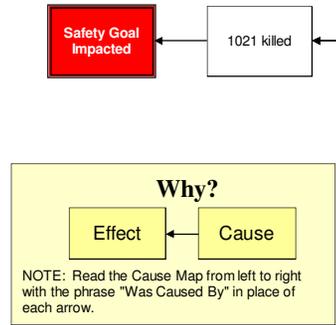
Passengers (and two crewmembers) were also killed by fire. Once the fire was started, it spread rapidly and was not put out. The fire spread rapidly because the ship was highly flammable. When this ship was constructed, there was no consideration of flammability. Additionally, the current of air created by the vessel speeding ahead drove the fire across the ship. The fact that an experienced Master would have allowed this situation was considered misconduct, negligence and inattention to duty - charges for which the Master was later convicted. The fire was not put out because of inadequate crew effort and insufficient fire-fighting equipment. The crew effort was inadequate because of a lack of training. The fire-fighting equipment was insufficient because of inadequate upkeep and inadequate inspections.

LOSS OF THE GENERAL SLOCUM

Fire, drowning kill over 1,000 Cause Map

2 Analysis

Cause Map Overview Level



NOTE: Read the Cause Map from left to right with the phrase "Was Caused By" in place of each arrow.

Even more detail can be added to this Cause Map as the analysis continues. As with any investigation the level of detail in the analysis is based on the impact of the incident on the organization's overall goals.

