



M/S Estonia

Memorial

30 year

*M/S Estonia was not seaworthy
when departing from Tallinn on
27 September 1994!*

Who is responsible?



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AFTERMATH OF THE DISASTER

Immediately after the sinking, on September 28, 1994 help was offered to salvage the wreck and the victims. A Norwegian salvage ship arrived in Hanko a week after the sinking and offered its services to the Swedish Government, but the offer from one of the world's largest salvage companies was ignored by the Government and formally rejected three months later.

On December 15, 1994, the Swedish Government decided not to salvage the victims, or the wreck. At the same time, the Government decided that the wreck should be covered in concrete, following a recommendation from the Swedish Maritime Administration. *The Act (1995:732) on the Protection of the Peace of the Grave at the Wreck of the Passenger Ship Estonia* prohibiting all underwater activities at the site of the wreck. The burial site around M/S Estonia is two square kilometres. Probably, in terms of area, the world's largest mass grave.

On 19 May 1996, the covering of M/S Estonia began. The work was expected to be completed within eight months but was called off soon after the start, due to strong protests from relatives and survivors and the likelihood that a submarine landslide would be caused by the amount of rock and sand dumped at the site. The budgeted cost was SEK 360 million, of which SEK 230 million was paid out, even though the project was discontinued.

In the autumn of 1997, the Government appointed *the Analysis Group to examine the Estonia disaster and its*

consequences. In the report submitted in November 1998, the recommendation was that "Efforts should be made to take care of and identify the victims who are inside and outside M/S Estonia" (SOU 1998:132).

In 1999, the Government decides not to follow the Analysis Group's recommendation to recover the victims and regrets previous decisions on covering.

INVESTIGATIONS

M/S Estonia was an Estonian ship that sank within the Finnish exclusive economic zone with most of the fatalities being Swedes. The governments of Estonia, Finland and Sweden agreed to establish a joint accident investigation commission (JAIC) for the three countries.

On 7 December 1997, after three years of investigation, the JAIC presented the final report. Swedish and international experts in shipbuilding and accident investigation have several times questioned the rapid sinking process as described by JAIC.

In Knut Carlqvist's book *Tysta leken* from 2001, many testimonies from survivors give a different picture than the one presented by the JAIC. Many survivors from deck 1 become aware of the danger early on and managed to escape up to the lifeboat deck. In the autumn of 2020, the documentary, *Estonia – the discovery that changes everything*, showed a previously unknown hole in the hull. The fact that the hole filmed in the documentary turns out to be next to the cabins that housed many survivors, is a remarkable coincidence.

Thanks to the documentary, *Estonia – the discovery that changes everything*, the Swedish Accident Investigation Board (SHK) and its Estonian counterpart OJK decided to investigate the matter further.

In January 2023, SHK and OJK presented their preliminary conclusions, among other things, that M/S Estonia was not seaworthy when she left Tallinn on 27 September 1994, contrary to the accident report from JAIC. This



changes all the conditions for the handling of the Estonia disaster, both politically and legally. Since SHK does not have the authority to investigate the issue of responsibility, the state must conduct a parliamentary investigation. The state must clarify what caused the Estonia disaster and who is responsible.

On 18 February 1999, the preliminary investigation into suspicion of crime was closed on the alleged grounds that there was nothing indicating that an intentional crime had caused the accident. Nor could negligence in maritime traffic be investigated because the officers responsible were dead. No maritime declaration, a judicial collection of facts and the taking of witness statements about what happened, was carried out. A normal legal procedure following a maritime accident with many casualties.

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*We will never give up the search
after the truth about M/S Estonia!*

THE DISASTER

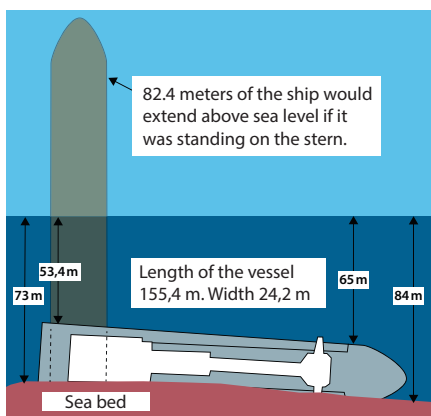
The wreck of M/S Estonia lies in international waters, within the Finnish exclusive economic zone, at a depth of 84 meters. From the hull to the surface, it is 53 meters. 137 passengers and crew were rescued, 95 dead bodies were recovered. 757 victims were left at the wreck site.

On 27 September 1994, M/S Estonia left the port of Tallinn for Stockholm. The departure was delayed while waiting for the loading of some military vehicles, which was observed by several witnesses. The ship had a 1 degree starboard list when she left the harbour. The weather forecast indicated strong breeze to near gale that could increase during the night.

At one o'clock in the morning, several loud metallic bangs, bumps and scraping sounds were heard against the hull. The ship began to roll from side to side and shortly afterwards came a quick and heavy starboard list. The ship returned upright but immediately regained a starboard list, which increased to 90 degrees. Several passengers who had their cabins below the car deck immediately made their way up the ship and slid down the outside of the hull. When the stern gradually sank under water, they moved forward. A downward turning movement on the starboard side increased and the stern of the ship hit the seabed first, after which the bow gradually sank completely.

M/S Estonia disappeared from the sea surface 50 minutes after the first list.





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SEA Foundation of Estonia Victims
and Relatives

Survivors for The Truth About M/S Estonia

The Estonia Group, formed in the
Swedish Parliament in 2000

MTÜ Memento Mare, Relatives Association
in Estonia www.mementomare.ee

National Support Group Network (NSN)
Norway www.stottegruppene.no

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