



Freak Waves in 2005

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The problem of freak waves in the Ocean attracts attention all over the world. At least six freak events were reported in 2005. The accidents happened in different regions of the world in the open sea and at the shoreline. The descriptions of these cases are given in the paper. First, the 965-foot cruiser “The Norwegian Dawn” with more than two thousand passengers on the way from the Bahamas to New York was struck on April 16 by the rogue wave at least 21 m height. The wave flooded cabins, injured passengers and forced the liner to stop for emergency repairs: “It was pure chaos”, as people claimed. The next wave washed off the breakwater two people on August 26 in Kalk Bay (South Africa); both were rescued, although one received serious head injuries. A similar case was registered on April 21, 1996, at the same place, when three people were washed off; only one survived that time. An anomalously high surface wave was observed on September 12 in the Black Sea (near the town of Gelendzhik, Blue Bay, Russia) during the measurements of film slicks conducted by the staff of the Institute of Applied Physics. The boat was sailing at 40-50 meters from the coast (the depth was about 2-3 m), when a single large breaking wave appeared at 15-20 m from the boat. It exceeded the typical waves about two times (1 m against 40-50 cm), passed the boat and broke at the coast. There was panic on October 16 at Maracas Beach (Trinidad Island, the Antilles), when a series of towering waves, many more than 25 feet high, sent seabathers, vendors and lifeguards running for their lives. As an eye-witness said, “you have waves that are coming in at 20 to 25 feet and in between you have sets of 12 to 18 feet.” One more case happened on November 11 in Southern Oregon (USA). A wave swept three people into the Pacific Ocean, killing two and injuring one. An unexpected flooding of the coast was observed on December 10 in Guadeloupe (the Caribbean Sea) by one of the authors (I.D.). At point Petit-Gavre the coast 2 meters off the shoreline was suddenly covered by water; during other 4 hours nothing similar happened. The reported cases confirm the existence of the phenomenon and topicality of the freak wave problem research.