

SIGNAL 2009

Weekly Newsletter #6 (Wednesday, July 8)

The last few days of the cruise were rather eventful. The additional shooting along the western end of line 1 in Orphan Basin and on the Newfoundland shelf was finished by 7 pm on Sunday. After the airgun array was back on board we started with the recovery of the remaining 11 OBS that were still deployed along the western part of line 1. Shortly after 2 am on Monday morning we had to stop the OBS recovery when we received the mayday call of the fishing boat Ocean Commander just 8 miles away from us. The ship was on fire and all seven crew members were in a life raft. Just one hour after the mayday call, all seven crew members were safely onboard Hudson. The SAR operation was carried out very professionally. After the rescue, Hudson changed course towards St. John's. Halfway from there we met with the Coast Guard ship Sir Wilfred Grenfell and transferred the seven rescued sailors.

The delay and detour caused by the SAR operation resulted in some concerns that we would not be able to recover all of the remaining OBS before we have to head back to St. John's for the end of the cruise and the scheduled crew change. Even worse, we already tried to release three of the OBS earlier without success. This put additional constraints on our schedule as we had to be at the OBS positions for the pre-programmed time of the backup release system. We also worried that these three OBS may not come back to the surface at all. However, in the end we managed to retrieve all but one of the OBS. These were two long and hard days for everybody onboard but in the end we could feel proud of what we achieved, a successful refraction seismic survey and the rescue of seven people from the Ocean Commander.

After the OBS recovery was finished at 1 pm on Tuesday we started our transit back to St. John's where we arrived at 6 am this morning. In summary, we used the airgun array for 1761 km along the five refraction seismic lines and deployed a total of 99 OBS. Three of the instruments never made it back to the surface and one instrument is possibly still drifting off West Greenland. The data collection was complemented by 29 sonobuoy deployments and 10 XBT measurements. Although some of the OBS and sonobuoys failed, we got complete data coverage along the lines with high-quality seismic records. We sailed 5720 nautical miles (10,600 km) and everybody is happy to head home after 34 days at sea. Thanks to everybody onboard for the hard work - it was a pleasure to sail on CCGS Hudson.

Cheers,
Thomas



Science staff and crew (photo Moira Burhoe)



Fire on Ocean Commander (photo Marcel Ruhnu)