

U.S.S. Thresher (SSN-593)

Date of Loss: 10 April, 1963

Returned to Service: No

Sank off New England coast while on sea trials following an overhaul. The exact cause is unknown. A Navy board of inquiry determined that the "most likely cause" was a failure in either a pipe, a pipe valve, or a hull weld, causing flooding somewhere near the engine room.

The flooding probably short-circuited an electrical system related to the main engine, causing the reactor to "scram" or shut down. Without power, the *Thresher* was unable to surface, and the continued flooding caused *Thresher* to drop below her crush depth where the pressure of the ocean destroyed her.

129 men lost, no survivors.

(9 officers, 85 crew, 18 Navy technicians, and 17 civilian contract technicians)

- The complete list of all men lost aboard *U.S.S. Thresher (SSN-593)*

Continue to next submarine, *U.S.S. Scorpion (SSN-589)*

Return to The Nuclear Era

Return to U.S. Peacetime Submarine Losses

The loss of the *Thresher* led to the development of the "Subsafe" program. "Subsafe" increased reserve buoyancy, thus making it easier for a submarine to rise to the surface despite damage or flooding. It also changed the valve control system, allowing all valves to be easily shut off from the control room.

It should be noted that failures of through-hull fittings are not unheard of, especially during test-depth dives (which is the reason, after all for such tests.) *U.S.S. Growler (SSG-577)* suffered just such a failure on 5 November, 1958, during her post-commissioning sea trials (while just 75 feet shy of her test depth.) In *Growler's* case, the temporary blank covering an unused cable fitting in the forward sonar room failed, leading to serious flooding. "Emergency Surface" was ordered, and *Growler* was able to surface, albeit with a forward down angle. However, she suffered only superficial damage, and was able to complete her sea trials and begin her operational career.

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