

## MONTHLY SAFETY SCENARIO

JULY 2021

# Tide caught pilot by surprise



It was morning and the vessel had finished loading. The weather was fine with a NW wind of 9 knots and westerly current of 2.5 knots, it was flood tide. The Chief Officer had completed all pre-departure checks. Present on the bridge with the Chief Officer were the Master and helmsman. Ten minutes before departure the pilot embarked. The Master greeted him on the bridge. The pilot informed the Master that there was an inbound vessel but that it would be of no real concern. The Chief Officer was not included in this briefing and no other issues were discussed or any specific plan agreed upon. The pilot and Master proceeded to the port bridge wing for departure. The pilot had the conn and the Master was monitoring. The vessel was facing downstream which was in a SE direction. The berth was in a river. One tug was available on the stern but was let go just after departure.

The pilot was in communication with the vessel, which was proceeding, upriver and the pilots agreed to meet port to port. The pilot thought it best to head further

to the south side of the river in order to pass the other vessel port to port.

The Chief Officer was in the cockpit and noticed that the current had increased to almost 4 knots and that the vessel was south of the planned course line. He thought the pilot and Master were aware of this and did not report it to them. When the vessel was just south of the course line the pilot ordered port helm in order to head downriver but the vessel was caught in the flood tide and the bow started to swing to starboard. The standby tug could not assist as it had been let go just after departure.

The pilot was confused and increased power ahead but the vessel continued to swing to starboard and proceeded directly across the river at a speed of around 7 knots. The high speed also made the thrusters useless.

The vessel was now heading for another vessel that was berthed at



the terminal on the south bank. The strong current surprised the pilot and he froze doing nothing for a minute.

At this point the Master feared that the risk of collision was imminent, relieved the pilot and ordered full astern to reduce the speed and also take advantage of the transverse thrust effect of the right hand propeller to swing the bow further to starboard. At the same time port anchor was dropped but it was too late. As a result of these actions the vessel's bow cleared the berthed vessel by around 30 metres but the vessel instead made heavy contact with the berth at a speed of about 4 knots.

## Questions

When discussing this case please consider that the actions at the time made sense for all involved. Do not only judge, but also ask why you think these actions were taken and ask if this could happen on your vessel?

1. What were the immediate causes of this accident?
2. Is there a risk that this kind of accident could happen on our vessel?
3. Do all officers have different responsibilities when on bridge?
4. Are all bridge team members encouraged to share information and to be assertive?
5. What sections of our SMS would have been breached if any?
6. Is our SMS sufficient to prevent this kind of accident?
7. Does our SMS address these risks?
8. Do we use all navigational equipment on the bridge while approaching the berth?
9. What are the criteria for using tugs?
10. How do we integrate the pilot into the bridge team?
11. What are our procedures when the pilot speaks the local language?
12. What is discussed during the pilot briefing?
13. Could this happen on our vessel?