

Heavy weather causes grounding in archipelago



It was an autumn night, and strong winds of Beaufort scale 10 hit a Handysize bulk carrier. The vessel was in ballast condition and sailing through an archipelago.

The Third Officer, acting as OOW, and a helmsman was on the bridge. The vessel was in hand steering mode and was only making 2 knots over the ground. It was difficult to maintain course and the wind was blowing in on the port bow. The helmsman had put the rudder hard to port but the vessel began to alter to starboard. The OOW called the Master and informed him that it was difficult to maintain course. The vessel was between two islands, which made the winds even stronger as the islands were creating a wind tunnel.

The Master came up on the bridge and ordered the OOW to go to the emergency steering room. The vessel was classed to have the engine control room constantly manned. The Master called the duty engineer and asked for the engine controls to be transferred to the bridge. When transferring

the engine controls the engine had to be put on standby.

The Master made an announcement on the PA system and asked all crew to come to the bridge. The Chief Officer was told to prepare the anchors.

The OOW was now in the steering gear room and confirmed that the rudder was hard to port.

The Chief Officer informed the Master that it was impossible to enter the main deck as large waves were washing over the deck.

The duty engineer called the Master and informed him that the bridge now had the engine controls. However, the vessel had drifted very close to an island during the engine transfer. Before the Master managed to increase the engine speed the vessel hit rocks.

Discussion

Go to the "File" menu and select "Save as..." to save the pdf-file on your computer.

You can place the marker below each question to write the answer directly into the file.



When discussing this case please consider that the actions taken at the time made sense for all involved. Do not only judge but also ask why you think these actions were taken and could this 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. How could this accident have been prevented?

4. Discuss the decision to transfer the engine controls to the bridge and put the engines on standby.

5. What are our Heavy Weather procedures?

6. According to our procedures what should we have done?

7. Should we ballast in a situation like this?

8. What sections of our SMS would have been breached if any?

9. Does our SMS address these risks?

10. How could we improve our SMS to address these issues?

11. What do you think was the root cause of this accident?

12. Is there any kind of training that we should do that addresses these issues?