

MONTHLY SAFETY SCENARIO

FEBRUARY 2023

Collision in river

It was the middle of the night and vessel A, a 6,500 TEU container vessel, was sailing out from a port in a busy river with a pilot conning the vessel. The weather was fine with clear skies and winds at around Beaufort scale 6. All navigation equipment on vessel A was in good working order except for the AIS transceiver, which was not working.

Vessel A was on an easterly course in the outbound deep-water channel of the river fairway. Vessel B was proceeding on a reciprocal course in the inbound fairway of the river. The vessels were in sight of each other. The Master, Chief Officer, lookout, helmsman and the pilot were on the bridge of vessel A.

Underestimated weather conditions

Vessel B, a Handymax bulk carrier, then reduced speed in order to time arrival for its berth. However, the bridge team on vessel B underestimated the impact of the wind and current, and the vessel was set towards the outbound fairway and her heading altered to port and towards vessel A. This caused vessel B to enter the outbound fairway.

No room for manoeuvre

Vessel A was sailing in the fairway of the extended deep-water channel but towards the centreline between the inbound and outbound fairway. The bridge team saw that vessel B had slowed down and that her heading was changing towards them.

There was some room for vessel A to turn to starboard and still remain in the fairway, but it was limited. The vessels were approaching each other and vessel A was not able to turn to starboard and clear vessel B and still remain in the fairway.

An attempt to communicate

The pilot on vessel A flashed the signal lamp and called vessel B on the VHF but vessel B did not respond. The pilot ordered full astern and tried to alter course to starboard with the bow thruster. This did not prevent the collision. The Master on vessel A saved the VDR data after the accident. There were no injuries or pollution.





Questions

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. How does COLREG 5 Look-out apply?
5. How does COLREG 7 Risk of collision apply?
6. How does COLREG 9 Narrow channels?
7. What sections of our SMS would have been breached if any?
8. Does our SMS address these risks?
9. How could we improve our SMS to address these issues?
10. Is there any kind of training that we should do that addresses these issues?

COLREGs

Rule 5 - Look out

In this case vessel B failed to keep a proper look-out.

Rule 7 - Risk of collision

When vessel B drifted towards the outbound side of the channel it should have been clear to both vessels that a risk of collision was developing. Vessel B did nothing, and vessel A tried to contact vessel B instead of taking evasive action. The COLREGS do not mention the use of VHF. The rules are clear and should not require any discussion between the vessels.

Rule 9 - Narrow channels

Neither of the vessels navigated near the outer limits of the fairway.