

OOW fell asleep and vessel grounded

The container vessel had visited five ports in Europe in six days, before proceeding to Asia. Before leaving for its final port in Europe the vessel had been delayed due to problems with a cargo crane. To make the scheduled berthing time at the next port the vessel had to increase speed. There was also a long pilotage at the next port.

The vessel departed around 2300 the previous evening and arrived at the next port around 1000 the following morning. The normal procedure was that the Chief Officer was awake during the cargo operation and also carried out the 4-8 watch. Usually, the Master took the evening watch after the cargo operation but in this instance it was impossible because the vessel departed around 2300 from the previous port. The Chief Officer carried out his morning watch as the pilot came on board early in the morning and after breakfast, he prepared the cargo operation. During the cargo operation the Master carried out administrative tasks.

Just before midnight the vessel departed for the final port and the Chief Officer went to bed to get some rest before his watch at 0400.



The Chief Officer woke up at 0345 and was on the bridge just before 0400. The Second Officer handed over the watch and told the Chief Officer there were no special orders, there was some traffic but nothing unusual, and that he should call the pilot station at 0600 to make arrangements for an 0800 berthing.

All navigational equipment was operational and the vessel's course was maintained by autopilot. Once he had taken over the watch The Chief Officer carried out his normal checks of the navigational equipment. Visibility was good with calm winds, so the Chief Officer told the lookout that he could go and rest but should be available on the radio.

Around 0430 the Chief Officer saw a fishing boat fleet that was about 6M away and to stay clear of the fishing boats he made a small alteration to starboard and then sat down in one of the cockpit chairs.

The Chief Officer suddenly felt a lot of vibration and heard a monotone alarm. In shock he realised that he had fallen asleep and was now aground on a small island. The sound



was from the cross track alarm on the electronic chart as the vessel was far from the planned course. The alarm had a low monotone signal and had not awoken the Chief Officer.

Shortly after the vessel ran aground the Master rushed into the bridge, found the Chief Officer in shock and reduced the engines to neutral.

The Master sounded the general alarm and gave the crew instructions and duties designed to establish the vessel's condition. In view of the Chief Officer's state of shock, the Master insisted he remain on the bridge until the situation was stabilised. It was quickly confirmed by the crew that the vessel was held fast forward while her stern was in deep water.

There was calm sea and the vessel was not believed to be in imminent danger. The Master transmitted a 'Pan Pan' urgency call giving the vessel's circumstances. This was received by the coastguard who deployed search and rescue assistance. After the initial crisis the Master contacted the DPA (designated person ashore) informing him of the situation and he, in turn, liaised with all necessary parties who needed to be involved.

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 accident could happen on our vessel?
3. How could this accident have been prevented?
4. Which sections of our SMS were breached if any?
5. Is our SMS sufficient to prevent this accident?
6. If procedures were breached why do you think this was the case?
7. Is it a requirement to always have a lookout on the bridge?
8. Do we have a risk assessment on board that addresses these risks?
9. How do we ensure that we get enough rest?
10. Is there any kind of training that we should do that addresses these issues?
11. What can we learn?