



香 港 商 船 資 訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Dragging anchor causing grounding of a vessel which resulted in marine and coastal pollution of fuel oil

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Crew

Summary

A Hong Kong registered bulk carrier dragged her anchor and went aground while anchoring at Kanggava Bay, Rennell Island of the Solomon Islands. The vessel later suffered a hull breach, resulting in marine and coastal pollution of fuel oil. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers, and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. When a partly loaded Hong Kong registered bulk carrier (*the vessel*) anchored at Kanggava Bay, Rennell Island of the Solomon Islands waiting for resuming her cargo loading, she dragged her anchor under the adverse weather conditions and finally grounded. The Master and crew members abandoned *the vessel* three days later after failing to refloat her. *The vessel* later suffered a hull breach which resulting in marine and coastal pollution of fuel oil. After three months' salvage operation, *the vessel* was made to refloat and towed away one month later to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

2. The investigation revealed that during the unpredictable deteriorating weather conditions, the Master and officers of *the vessel* failed to maintain sufficient situation awareness to assess the possible potential risks arising from the effect of the weather on the anchorage and the ship's conditions such as loading, draughts and engine, and to take proper preventive measures accordingly. The investigation also revealed that the crew had neither utilized the engine and the manoeuvring systems of *the vessel* properly to deal with the dragging of anchor in adverse weather, nor properly responded to navigational emergencies, including the necessary actions after grounding, such as refloating and prevention of further damage.

3. The investigation also reflected that the crew failed to operate the Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (SVDR) according to the procedures, and the lack of support from the company in updating the weather information to the Master. Apart from the attack of tropical cyclone after the grounding, the subsequent oil leakage was partly caused by the primitive port facilities with insufficient salvage tugs, oil pollution prevention equipment and the lack of port security.

Lessons Learnt

4. In order to avoid recurrence of similar accidents in the future, the management company and all masters must ensure that:

- (a) Proper risk assessment is to be carried out by taking into account the risks for operating vessels at a port with insufficient support and establishing guidelines or procedures in response to the hazards identified.
- (b) Proper anchoring arrangement and effective anchor watches must be maintained, and engines must be prepared for emergencies when anchoring close to the shore in poor weather or poor holding ground conditions.
- (c) Proper monitoring and assessment of the crucial issues are to be carried out, e.g. the weather conditions, including the updates to the weather forecast, the pieces of advice contained in the sailing directions, and all developing dangerous situations, together with early and effective countermeasures. The support from the company is critical when the port is not well facilitated.
- (d) Proper training shall be enhanced, including the knowledge and ability to use ship's engine and maneuvering systems and drills in response to navigational emergencies.

5. The attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers, and crew is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

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