



## 香 港 商 船 資 訊

## HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

**Collision between a container vessel and a general cargo vessel at the Yangtze River Estuary**

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

***Summary***

A Hong Kong-registered container vessel collided with a China-licensed general cargo vessel at the entrance of the Yangtze River, resulting in the capsizing of the general cargo vessel and the death of all six crew members. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers, and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident applicable to Hong Kong registered ships.

**The Incident**

1. A Hong Kong-registered container vessel collided with a China-licensed general cargo vessel at the entrance of the Yangtze River when the container vessel was en route from Shanghai to Zhoushan. At the time of the collision, the container vessel was accelerating its speed and intended to enter the deep-water channel of the Yangtze River estuary under the pilotage of a licensed pilot. The general cargo vessel, being the give-way vessel in the accident, suddenly turned to its right, possibly with the intention to overtake the container vessel by crossing its bow as soon as possible. Finally, the general cargo vessel collided with the container vessel, resulting in the capsizing of the general cargo vessel and the death of all six crew members on board but only a few scratches left at the bulbous bow of the container vessel.

2. The investigation revealed that the contributory factors of the accident were as follows:

- (a) both the container vessel and the general cargo vessel, when navigating in the Yangtze River, failed to follow the following rules and regulations under the "Shanghai Water Safety Supervision Rules", "Regulations on the Ship Routing System for the Shanghai Section of the Yangtze River" and "Crew Regulations" issued by the local Administration:- (i) both vessels failed to navigate carefully; (ii)

the general cargo vessel impeded the safe passage of the container vessel, failed to fulfil the obligation to avoid heavily laden vessels, failed to maintain a watch of the VHF channel 71 to receive safety messages and warnings from the VTS and her master was not on duty at the bridge although the channel was narrow and the traffic was dense; (iii) the container vessel did not take appropriate actions to avoid a collision when the give-way vessel (i.e., the general cargo vessel) failed to take appropriate avoiding actions;

- (b) the container vessel failed to follow the requirements of Rule 5 (Look-out) of the “Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972” (COLREGs) i.e. “to maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing at all times and by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision”; and
- (c) the master of the container vessel failed to carry out an effective exchange of information regarding the safety of the navigation when the pilot was on board and neither did he question, alert or correct the manoeuvring instructions taken, which did not comply with the requirements of the resource management of the bridge and “Watchkeeping arrangements and principles to be observed” in Part 4-1, Chapter VIII/2, Part A of STCW Code (*the STCW Code*).

## **Lessons Learnt**

3. In order to avoid recurrence of similar accidents during operation in the future, the ship management company, all masters, officers, and crew members should note items (a) to (c) while the ship management company should also note item (d).

- (a) the officers on navigational watch shall at all times maintain a proper look-out to comply with the requirements of Rule 5 of COLREGS (Look-out);
- (b) when a vessel is arriving or leaving a port under the pilotage of a pilot, the master and the pilot shall properly exchange information regarding passage plan, local conditions and the ship's characteristics, and the master and/or the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall cooperate closely with the pilot and maintain an accurate check on the ship's position and movement, to meet the requirements of paragraph 49 of *the STCW Code*;

- (c) if in any doubt as to the pilot's actions or intentions, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall seek clarification from the pilot and shall notify the master immediately and take whatever action is necessary if doubt still exists before the master arrives, to meet the requirements of paragraph 50 of *the STCW Code*; and
- (d) the ship management company shall ensure effective implementation of the shipboard Safety Management System and enhance training on bridge resources and team management for achieving effective management and teamwork to reduce the risk of human error and failure to detect faults in a timely manner.

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

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28 July 2023