



香港商船資訊

HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Collision of Ships in a traffic separation zone

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

Summary

Recently a Hong Kong registered general cargo ship collided with another vessel in the Inland Sea of Japan. This information note draws the attention of the shore management and shipboard staff to the importance of passage planning, and the need to verify a ship's position by more than one navigational means whenever circumstances allow.

The Incident

1. In February 2003 a Hong Kong registered general cargo ship collided with a log carrier in the inland Sea of Japan. The collision occurred in good visibility condition inside a traffic separation zone. After a series of course alterations to keep clear of a number of fishing vessels ahead, the general cargo ship had unknowingly entered the opposite traffic lane of the traffic separation zone, and subsequently collided with a log carrier which was approaching on a reciprocal course. As a result of the collision the general cargo ship sustained severe damage at the port side shell plating while the log carrier crushed its stem and forecastle.

2. The investigation into the incident has established that the lack of passage planning for the intended voyage, and the incorrect plotting of the ship's position by a deck officer of the general cargo ship, were contributory factors leading to the collision. Shortly before the collision the master of the general cargo ship had made a number of course alterations to port to avoid fishing vessels obstructing the ship's own traffic lane. However, due to incorrect plotting of the ship's positions by a deck officer, the master was not aware that the ship had entered into the opposite traffic lane and hence failed to take early action to bring the ship back to the correct lane. Before proceeding on the voyage, the master conducted no passage planning and relied solely on his experience to ensure safe navigation of the ship.

3. The investigation also revealed that the bridge team of the general cargo ship had depended solely on radar fixes to monitor the ship's position. No other alternative methods, such as using the GPS, were employed to check the accuracy of the ship's position.

Lessons learnt

4. The requirement of passage planning is stipulated in Section A-VIII/2 of the STCW Code. Passage plan should be prepared well in advance of a voyage where practicable and should be agreed by the master and navigating officers. All relevant sources and up-to-date references should be used in preparing and appraising the plan. Taking into account the numerous tasks needed to be performed to maintain navigational safety on the passage, such as reporting of position to coastal station, monitoring of ship's position, collision avoidance etc., the effectiveness of the bridge team in handling unexpected situations would be seriously hampered without a well-prepared passage plan.

5. The need to verify a ship's position by more than one navigational means is of utmost importance. Para. 47 of Section A-VIII/2 of the STCW Code stipulates that "*Fixes shall be taken at frequent intervals and shall be carried out by more than one method whenever circumstances allow*". Reliance on a single fixing method should be avoided whenever possible. Using only one single fixing method will run the risk that an error in identification of navigation mark or faulty electronic information may have gone unnoticed, leading to serious navigational hazards.

6. The attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, master and officers is drawn on the lessons learnt above.

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