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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Collision of Vessels in the East China Sea

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

Summary

A collision between a Hong Kong registered bulk carrier and a fishing vessel happened in the East China Sea and resulted in the missing of one fisherman. This information note draws the attention of Ship owners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters and Officers to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Accident

1. A Hong Kong registered bulk carrier was sailing in a position about 60 nautical miles off Zhoushan in the East China Sea, where a number of fishing vessels were carrying out fishing activities in its vicinity. The chief officer (C/O) and a deck cadet were on duty in the wheelhouse. The C/O later went to the toilet and left the deck cadet alone to navigate the ship. The deck cadet subsequently noticed a fishing vessel crossing his bow with the risk of collision, but he was not able to take correct action in a timely manner to avoid the collision. The C/O returned to the bridge after about 10 minutes. He noticed the situation and took action of collision avoidance, but in vain. As a result, the bulk carrier collided with the fishing vessel. One crewmember of the fishing vessel was reported missing in the incident.
2. Investigation into the incident identified that the C/O of the bulk carrier left the bridge without being properly relieved by another navigating officers. The deck cadet was unqualified and was not able to take correct action to avoid collision in a timely manner.
3. The bulk carrier failed to comply with Regulation II/1 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and Rule 5 (look-out), Rule 7 (risk of collision), Rule 8 (action to avoid collision), Rule 16 (action by giving-way vessel) of International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS).

4. The investigation also revealed that the fishing vessel did not comply with the Rule 5 (look-out) of the COLREGS. When the fishing vessel was carrying out the fishing activity, the bridge was unattended by any person because the master and all crew members were engaging in the fishing activity.

Lessons Learnt

5. The duty navigating officer shall never leave the bridge without being properly relieved by another navigating officers.

6. The master and the navigating officers shall strictly comply with the STCW and the COLREGS at all times.

7. The attention of Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters and Officers is drawn to the lessons learnt above.

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