



GOOD CATCH from **The American Club**

Bad Assumptions Cause a Bad Incident

OVER RELIANCE ON VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE (VTS)

A large bulk carrier and an offshore supply vessel (OSV) collided in the channel during foggy conditions.

Description

When the bulk carrier got underway from the dock, heading outbound, the weather was overcast with intermittent rain. But it soon became very foggy with limited visibility. The pilots normally did not get underway during heavy fog, but if the vessel was already underway in the port area, as this vessel was, the pilots normally completed the transit.

The bulk carrier proceeded outbound in the channel at normal speed. The wind was on the starboard beam, which steadily caused the vessel to be set to its port side. Neither the pilot nor the bridge team had recognized this at the time. The Master was on the phone with the vessel manager and was relying entirely on the pilot for the vessel's navigation. The rest of the bridge team was distracted by the fog and the lack of visual references, and the pilot was distracted by another pilot on the radio asking about the fog.

Meanwhile, an OSV was inbound in the channel. It had a pilot onboard and was proceeding along the starboard side of the channel.

The port had a functioning Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) that monitored all vessel traffic and provided information to vessels transiting within the port. The VTS did not direct vessel traffic but would typically contact a vessel if it appeared to be off course or heading into shallow water. The VTS was generally regarded as attentive and helpful, relaying good and timely information.

Based on radar and the electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS), the pilot on the OSV recognized that the bulk carrier was being set onto his side of the channel, but he did not say anything. He assumed the pilot on the bulk carrier would alter course to bring the vessel back to the starboard side of the channel, especially since the bulk carrier was approaching a right turn in the channel. Additionally, he assumed the VTS would say something to the bulk carrier that would cause it to move back to its side of the channel.

The Master of the OSV independently recognized that the bulk carrier was moving into his side of the channel. He discussed his concern with his pilot. The pilot indicated he was aware of the outbound bulk carrier's position and would continue to monitor it.

Unfortunately, the VTS did not raise any concerns as the two vessels approached each other, and the bulk carrier did not alter course. As the two vessels were entering the turn in the channel, it became apparent that a collision was imminent. The Master and pilot on the OSV simultaneously ordered full starboard rudder and full power to avoid a collision. But those actions were too late, and the bulk carrier and OSV collided in the turn in the channel.



Actual Damage

The bow of the bulk carrier and the port side of the OSV were severely damaged. The combined damages exceeded \$4.5 million, which included necessary temporary repairs as well as permanent repairs. Both vessels were also off charter for many weeks for repairs.



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Potential Damage

It was very fortunate that no one was injured on either vessel. Although the actions by the Master and pilot on the OSV were too late to prevent the collision, their actions avoided damage to their bow, where several crew members were laying out mooring lines. A bow-to-bow collision with the taller and substantially larger bulk carrier would have very likely killed or seriously injured several crew members on the bow of the OSV.

What went wrong?

- ★ The pilot and bridge team on the OSV overly relied on the VTS by assuming the VTS would identify and point out navigational concerns or errors to the bulk carrier.
- ★ The bridge resource management on the bulk carrier was inadequate. The bridge team was distracted and failed to accurately monitor their vessel's position and that of other vessels. They also failed to recognize they would likely meet an inbound vessel at a turn in the channel. In the foggy conditions, they should have maintained their focus and relied more on the ECDIS and radar for safe navigation.
- ★ Even though each vessel was aware of the other vessel, there was no communication between them, and no agreement on the passing arrangement and location.
- ★ The Master on the OSV assumed that his pilot's acknowledgement of his concern about the bulk carrier meant that appropriate and timely action would be taken.

When you identify a hazard before something goes wrong...

it's a Good Catch.

When you stop an operation before something bad happens...

it's a Good Catch.

When verify each assumption related to safe navigation,
especially in limited visibility conditions...

that's a Good Catch, too!



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