



GOOD CATCH from **The American Club**

Incident Damages Captain's Pride! (COLREGS)

Description

A panamax size bulk cargo vessel appeared to lose steering while departing port. Fearing the worst, the Captain quickly sounded the danger signal to alert all other nearby vessels. The pilot aboard immediately called for assistance resulting in four tugs that raced to the vessel's aid. The vessel was

maneuvered by the tugs to a safe anchorage so the steering failure could be identified and corrected. The local authorities required two tugs to stand by the vessel as a precautionary measure.

Thereafter, the local port state control authorities and a classification society surveyor boarded the vessel to investigate the incident. A technical representative from the steering system manufacturer was also dispatched to the vessel.

Then the crew discovered that a small set screw holding the arrow to the small shaft in the old analog rudder angle indicator on the bridge had backed out just enough that the indicator arrow came loose and appeared to be stuck pointing in one direction (down). The steering system was actually working fine.



COLREGS Rule 5 : Look-out

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as 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.

Well, that was a bit embarrassing!

The bridge team failed to visually recognize that the vessel was actually turning and responding to the rudder as intended. They also failed to use the Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS) to verify that the vessel was turning as expected. Additionally, no one was contacted in after steering to determine which way the rudder was pointing, verify that the steering system was working, or take control of the steering system manually.

Actual Damage

The actual cost for the tugs, the pilot (again), launches and the steering gear expert exceeded \$74,000 and the vessel was delayed for 3 days during which time she was placed off hire by the charterers. Needless to say, the Captain's pride had also been bruised by the incident.

Potential Damages

The poor reaction by the bridge team could have made an embarrassing situation worse. Convinced it was an emergency, the bridge team might have taken extreme actions such as dropping the anchor while the vessel's speed was above effective limits. The vessel could have traveled or swung outside the channel potentially impacting other traffic or grounding.





Prevention

- ★ Are steering failure drills conducted on your vessel? Do they involve the engineers as well as the bridge team? Are they realistic?
- ★ Is achieving and maintaining compliance with Rule 5, Look-out, of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) discussed on your vessel?
- ★ What is meant by “all available means” in Rule 5 of the COLREGS?

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

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

When you use “all available means” and don’t rely on just one system to indicate a problem or a hazardous situation developing...

it’s a Good Catch.

it’s a Good Catch.

that’s a Good Catch, too!



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