

Casualty Circular No. 7 of 2005

(Regulatory/Guidance/Information)

Sub: Collision between Bulk Carrier (Motor Vessel) & Feeder Barge (Daughter vessel) at roadsteads of Indian waters

OBJECTIVE:

To enforce the provisions of International Conventions and National Regulations governing the Indian / Foreign Flag Ships in Indian major/minor and private ports with the aim of achieving safety of ships, ports, waters within and beyond the port limits upto the territorial sea and marine environment.

SCOPE:

To guide Flag State / Class Surveyors, Ship Owners, Ship Managers, Ship Agents, Training Institutes, Workshops, Masters and Seafarers, Organisations of major ports, public and private minor ports functioning under the Indian Federal Government.

CASE HISTORY:

A very serious casualty occurred at outer anchorage of one of the major ports of India due to the contact between a mother vessel (Bulk Carrier) loading iron ore and a feeder vessel (Barge) feeding iron ore cargo to this vessel anchored safely. The Master of the bulk carrier had informally stopped the loading operations because of deteriorating prevailing weather conditions at anchorage. The feeder vessel operators and the Port Authorities apparently were not aware of this fact. The collision between these two vessels took place in the early hours of morning, when the Duty Officer and duty Able Boded seaman (AB) saw the feeder barge approaching towards their vessel in the inclement weather conditions prevailing at that time (height of swell reported to be about 2.5 metres). The Duty Officer and the attending Stevedore Foreman tried their best to verbally alert the barge to prevent it from coming long side. Inadequate availability of proper communicating equipments on barge mis-interpreted the instructions given by the ships Officer and the Supervisor. The Barge Master tried to alter the course to steer away but due to adverse weather conditions, the barge came very close to the bulk carrier and eventually made heavy contact with the shell plating in the way of a Fuel Oil Tank thereby breaching the integrity of the hull resulting in oil pollution of about 110 metric tonnes. The Master of the vessel initiated his ships contingency plan to control the situation. The vessel sustained extensive damage to the stern region of its hull. This contact caused spillage of large quantity of persistent oil in the sheltered waters fortunately there was no loss of life or injury to persons.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The operational plans were not properly understood and implemented by both mother vessel and daughter vessel.
2. Though the mother vessel had Safety Management System for Key Shipboard operation in place the implementation of the system may found to be defective as
 - A. Watchkeeping procedures/Standing instructions for operations at anchorage were not established or documented.
 - B. No special instructions on loading of cargo from barges were issued by the Master to the Duty Officers or Duty AB.
3. The feeder barge was not efficiently manned for its operational area.
4. The feeder barge was inadequately equipped especially with respect to conduct of effective communication with the mother vessel and shore establishment.
5. Inadequate control of such operations at the outer roads by the Port Authorities.
6. Inadequate emergency preparedness of the Port Authorities to deal with such situations.

Based on these observations and findings, it is recommended that:

1. The Ship Owners/Ship Managers/Ship Masters shall ensure effective implementation of the ISM Code on board their vessel by giving due emphasize to the safe watchkeeping in the anchorage during the loading/discharging operations.
2. For effective communication on barges on the Coast of India should be fitted with communication equipment.
3. The operator of the feeder vessel shall provide the loading/discharging schedule to the Master of the feeder vessel to facilitate smooth operations with mother vessel, measures must be initiated for implementation of bulk cargo loading and unloading code on coast of India.
4. The Port Authorities should exercise due diligence and monitor the movement of barges including their safe operations. They should also implement the emergency preparedness plan to combat any emergency situations taking place in the vicinity of the port.

Sd/-
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