



Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung

Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

Federal Higher Authority subordinated to the Ministry of
Transport and Digital Infrastructure

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Press Release 09/17

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) hereby gives notice that the Investigation Report No. 499/15 was published on 14 March 2017. The report deals with the grounding of the multi-purpose ship BBC MAPLE LEA on 17 December 2015 in the Canadian Lac Saint-Louis. This report – as well as all previous reports – is available on the website <http://www.bsu-bund.de> and can be downloaded.

Short version:

Grounding of the BBC MAPLE LEA in the Lac Saint-Louis, Canada

The German-flagged multipurpose ship BBC MAPLE LEA cast off from the port of Côte-Sainte-Catherine on the morning of 17 December 2015 to commence her voyage to Falmouth. A pilot was on board for the passage through the Saint Lawrence Seaway. The BBC MAPLE LEA initially proceeded in a westerly direction on the Canal

de la Rive Sud to turn in Lac-Saint-Louis for lack of an opportunity to turn in the port of lading. The pilot favoured the fairway section west of buoy A13 for the turning manoeuvre. The area off the locks at Beauharnois was designated for the turning manoeuvre in the shipboard voyage plan, which would have entailed a detour

totaling 12 nm (6 nm in each direction). The BBC MAPLE LEA's draught stood at 8 m.

The turning manoeuvre west of buoy A13 failed, which resulted in the BBC MAPLE LEA sailing out of the fairway south-west of buoy A18 and grounding there in an area with water depths of approx. 7 m. The bow thruster was

damaged in the process, which resulted in a small spill of hydraulic oil. The accident did not cause injury to any individual. It was possible to haul the BBC MAPLE LEA free at about midday on the following day.

The accident was significantly caused by high speed. The pilot and the VTS did not comment on the accident. The German vessels owner of the BBC MAPLE LEA dealt with the accident extensively. Therefore

the investigation report concludes without safety recommendations.

The investigation report is available on www.bsu-bund.de.

Long version:

Grounding of the BBC MAPLE LEA in the Lac Saint-Louis, Canada

The German-flagged multipurpose ship BBC MAPLE LEA cast off from the port of Sainte-Catherine on the morning of 17 December 2015 to commence her voyage to Falmouth. A pilot was on board for the passage through the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Good weather prevailed. In addition to the pilot, the master, the officer on watch and a helmsman were on the bridge.

Since the Canal de la Rive Sud is just under 100 m wide, the BBC MAPLE LEA had to first sail the canal in a westerly direction so as to be able to subsequently turn in an open area not bound by banks on each side and then sail back toward Montreal. During the passage of the canal, the master and the pilot discussed the upcoming turning manoeuvre. The shipboard plan provided for a turning manoeuvre shortly before the lock of Beauharnois. The Pilot advised the master that the ship should already be turned shortly behind the west end of the canal in the fairway from buoy A13 on. West of this buoy the course of the fairway changed to southwest, whereupon the fairway widens to a maximum of 355 m. Outside the fairway, the water depth drops rapidly to 7 m. MAPLE LEA's draught stood at 7,8 m forward and 8 m aft. One agreed upon the turning area favored by the pilot resulting in the route decreasing by 13 nm.

The canal passage went according to plan. At 0730 the BBC MAPLE LEA sailed out of the canal into the fairway of the Lac Saint-Louis with 8,8 kts speed over ground. For the upcoming turning manoeuvre, the master went to the conning position to operate the bow thruster. At 0748, the BBC MAPLE LEA approached buoy A13 with 8,7 kts. The ship sailed into the middle of the fairway. At the same time of the turning manoeuvre the nautical watch officers handed over the watch.

After a short port manoeuvre the pilot intended to turn the ship over starboard by means using of the bow thruster. Since the speed of 6.4 knots was too high, the bow thruster had no effect. The pilot ordered the engine to full astern and the bow thruster to full power to starboard in the middle of the turning area when the rest speed was 5.3 kts. However, the ship continued to head towards the west buoy line. This happened also because the master initially missed the "full astern-manoeuve". Only when the ship's speed dropped below 4 kts, she slowly turned to starboard, but meanwhile passed the western buoy line and grounded there. All attempts to get the ship clear failed. The master of the BBC MAPLE LEA ordered the anchor to be dropped. Water ingress could be ruled out. Soundings revealed that the BBC MAPLE LEA grounded in the sandy bottom of the lake in the area of her forecastle with approx. 1/5 of the ship's length (25-30 m).

Hours later, an oil slick was noticed on the water surface in the area of the forecastle and reported. The crew and later on the specialist company commissioned could prevent the hydraulic oil spilled from the damaged bow thruster from spreading. The day after the BBC MAPLE LEA was towed free with the assistance of two tugs and returned to Sainte-Catherine.

The accident was mainly caused by too high speed rendering the bow thruster being inefficient. The bridge communication did not work out properly. The investigation of the accident was complicated by the pilot and the VTS not commenting on the accident. The German ship's owner of the BBC MAPLE LEA dealt with the accident extensively. Therefore the investigation report concludes without safety recommendations.

Volker Schellhammer
Director