



Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

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The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) published the investigation report No. 289/17 on 2 August 2018. The report deals with the collision between the MV FINNSKY and the steam icebreaker STETTIN on the river Warnow on 12 August 2017. This report is available on <https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/News> for download.

Short version:

Less serious marine casualty – Collision FINNSKY with STETTIN

At about 0955 on 12 August 2017, the incoming MV Finnsky, flying the Finnish flag, was sailing on the river Warnow, when she collided with the outbound German historical craft, the steam ice breaker STETTIN on the river Warnow during the HANSE SAIL. The FINNSKY sailed astern on the western side of the fairway to the berth 60. STETTIN also sailed towards the western side of the fairway and attempted to pass the oncoming FINNSKY on FINNSKY's port side. A course

alteration to port with hard rudder angle by STETTIN did not suffice to avoid the collision. Therefore the vessels collided. STETTIN was torn open level with the boiler room above the waterline on a length of about 2 m and a height of about 30 cm. The bumper in the area of FINNSKY's stern on the port side was slightly deformed and a hole with a length of 15 cm and a height of 3 cm formed. 10 persons were injured onboard the STETTIN. No pollutants escaped.

All investigation reports, safety recommendations and other information published by the BSU are available on <https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications>.

Long version:

Less serious marine casualty – collision FINNSK with STETTIN

At about 0955 on 12 August 2017, the incoming MV Finnsky, flying the Finnish flag, was sailing on the river Warnow, when she collided with the outbound German historical craft, the steam ice breaker STETTIN near buoy 43/SM2. FINNSKY had turned on the turning circle (turning circle in the fairway) and sailed astern on the western side of the fairway to the berth 60. STETTIN also sailed towards the western side of the fairway and attempted to pass the oncoming FINNSKY on FINNSKY's port side. This manoeuvre was not agreed upon with FINNSKY's ship command. A course alteration to port with hard rudder angle by STETTIN did not suffice to avoid the collision. Therefore the vessels collided. STETTIN bumped with her starboard side on FINNSKY's aft bumper, the so called "ducktail". STETTIN was torn open level with the boiler room above the waterline on a length of about 2 m and a height of about 30 cm. The bumper in the area of FINNSKY's stern on the port side was slightly deformed and a hole with a length of 15 cm and a height of 3 cm formed. 10 persons were injured onboard the STETTIN. No pollutants escaped.

The collision involving the RoRo-ferry FINNSKY and the steam ice breaker STETTIN, approved as historical craft and carrying 176 passengers, is due to an initially incorrect passage planning, and an insufficient perception of the actual traffic situation of STETTIN, the police failing to conduct safety measures by its police boats on the estuary and MV FINNSKY taking the risk of sailing astern for a distance of about 1 nm with a speed of 4-5 kts in dense traffic without a responsible officer on watch on the aft maneuvering station, which arose from the lack of communication via VHF and unambiguous agreements with the Finnsky and the VTS respectively.

The STETTIN sailed under pilotage, while the master handed over the command to his mate shortly after having cast off and the mate executed the engine orders given by the pilot and controlled the hand rudder. The FINNSKY's bridge wings were manned with the master and the chief officer, respectively, and she sailed astern within the range of vision to her berth. In doing so, her track had to be corrected several times by means of the bow thruster. Neither the STETTIN nor the FINNSKY perceived the audible signals sounded by each vessel with the whistle. On board the FINNSKY 3 short sounds were given twice which meant: "I sail astern". They were not heard by the crew onboard the STETTIN, possibly because of the fact that FINNSKY's whistle was only directed to the front. In contravention with the operational safety manual of the STETTIN, 10 – 15 passengers were continuously on the bridge up until the collision and the mate temporarily moderated the voyage via the intercommunication system, while the master left the bridge. These surrounding circumstances led to the pilot not being able to focus on the traffic situation. The BSU was not able to determine why the pilot's attempts to call the FINNSKY did not succeed and were not recorded on the FINNSKY.

Altogether, the vessels in the area of the FINNSKY sailed with a speed of about 5 – 6 knots and rapidly in the dense traffic, so that the response times were low at a given encounter speed of about 10 knots. This was even more aggravated by the fact, that the STETTIN's vessels command was influenced in their decision making by a cutter, in contravention of the rule, crossing in front of her bow immediately before the collision. However, only a courageous hard to starboard manoeuvre could have helped to avoid the collision, since a rapid turn over port in close quarters with a turning circle diameter of 360 m is not possible due to STETTIN's big right hand fixed pitch propeller and a relatively small rudder. . Then, the STETTIN would have grounded in the narrow fairway. A full astern manoeuvre would have led to a catastrophe because STETTIN would have broached behind the

FINNSKY. Unfortunately, no additional safety measures were taken by the waterways police in this awkward situation. Despite the VTS being aware of the fact that an encounter of large vessels with small vessels would take place no safeguarding by police boats was carried out on the lower Warnow. The VTS did not issue special notes for maritime shipping with respect to berthing and casting off. According to § 33 German Traffic Regulations for Navigable Maritime Waterways the other traffic should have shown consideration to the FINNSKY, since she was already in the process of berthing which started with turning and an astern manoeuvre towards her berth.

Within the scope of the Historical Craft Regulation of 2003, the Ship Safety Division issued licenses for the STETTIN for 130/225 persons which should also be valid for international voyages if a foreign port state approves the licenses. From the BSU's point of view, the STETTIN does not fall under the Historical Craft Regulation but as a passenger ship under the EU Directive for passenger vessels and the SOLAS-Regulations with respect to international voyages. The STETTIN is unable to satisfy both. In particular, the calculations for the stability of a ship in damaged condition revealed that the STETTIN cannot meet regulations set for the construction of passenger ships. The safety appliances available on board (lifeboat, life-jackets and the rescue boat not existent) do not comply with the EU-Passenger-Ship-Directive either. Therefore the BSU made the decision to recommend the Ship Safety Division to revoke the Safety License for Historical Crafts issued for the STETTIN. The BSU did identify further safety gaps with regard to the operation of the ship, the pilots association Wismar/Rostock/Stralsund, the safeguarding of traffic during the HANSE SAIL, the VTS Warnemünde as well as the Ship Safety Division and accordingly addressed them in this report. Measures have already been taken to improve safety. As regards the STETTIN, it should be taken into account that she is predominantly manned by a voluntary crew, who carry out an honorary appointment in order to preserve the ice breaker. However, the type of business should be reviewed. Therefore the BSU recommended the Ship Safety Division to revoke the Safety License for Historical Crafts issued for the STETTIN. The BSU recommended the owner of the FINNSKY, inter alia, to equip their RoRo-ferries sailing on the river Warnow with a radar unit installed aft, so that the traffic can be monitored much better when the ship is sailing astern.

Ulf Kaspera
Director