



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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The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) hereby announces the publication of the Investigation Report 405/20 on 25 November 2021. The report deals with the allision of a quay wall by the tanker NORTHSEA RATIONAL on 25 November 2020 in Hamburg and is available for download at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/News>

Allision with a quay wall by the tanker NORTHSEA RATIONAL in Hamburg

The NORTHSEA RATIONAL cast off from her berth in Hamburg to sail for the North Sea on the morning of 25 November 2020. After passing the Köhlbrand, the ship swung onto the Elbe. When the NORTHSEA RATIONAL was close to the desired course, the pilot informed the ship's command that it was now possible to switch to autopilot. At this point, the ship was sailing at a speed of 10 kts. The northern bank was not far away on the river.

During the switching operation, the rudder suddenly moved to starboard quickly and unintentionally, reaching a rudder angle of 26.7° in the process. It then returned to the midships position after a brief period. The rudder deflection caused the ship to start turning to starboard. The bridge team's efforts to regain control of the helm failed and the NORTHSEA RATIONAL continued to turn toward the bank. The measures taken by the ship's command led to a reduction in the speed of impact with a quay wall on the north side of the river.

The allision caused heavy damage to the NORTHSEA RATIONAL's forecastle, which made it necessary to call at a shipyard. The quay wall also suffered heavy damage. Nobody was injured and there was no damage to the environment due to the event.

The investigation report deals extensively with the technical investigations into the cause of the accident. It addresses the incorrect configuration of the steering gear control system, the resulting heavy load on electronic components and the sudden failure of a relay. Three expert reports were prepared in the course of these investigations, the findings of which also form part of this report.

The safety recommendation made in this report refers to the improvement of the steering gear control manufacturer's manual.

All investigation reports, safety recommendations and other information published by the BSU are available at

<https://www.bsu-bund.de/EN/Publications>.

Ulf Kaspera
Director