



**Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung**  
Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

## **Interim Investigation Report 108/22**

### **Serious Marine Casualty**

**Cargo fire on the LASCOMBES  
in the connecting port of Bremerhaven  
on 1 April 2022**

29 March 2023

Pursuant to the second sentence of Article 28(1) of the Law to improve safety of shipping by investigating marine casualties and other incidents (Maritime Safety Investigation Law – SUG) in conjunction with the second sentence of Article 14(2) of Directive 2009/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 establishing the fundamental principles governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector, the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation publishes an interim investigation report within a period of 12 months of a very serious or serious marine casualty if it is not possible to complete the corresponding investigation report within that period.

This interim investigation report should not be used in court proceedings or proceedings of the Maritime Board. Reference is made to Article 34(4) SUG.

The German text shall prevail in the interpretation of this interim investigation report.

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## 1 FACTUAL INFORMATION

### 1.1 Photograph of the ship



Figure 1: Photo of the LASCOMBES<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 Ship's particulars

Name of the ship:	LASCOMBES
Type of the ship:	Bulk carrier
Flag:	Marshall Islands (MHL)
Port of registry:	Majuro
IMO-number:	9500819
Call sign:	V7A2650
Owner (acc.to Equasis):	MINSHENG ZHI FAN SHANGHAI SHPG
Shipping company:	NINGBO ZRICH SHIPPING CO.,LTD
Year built:	2011
Shipyard:	Qingshan Shipyard, China
Classification society:	China Classification Society (CCS)
Length overall:	189.99 m
Breadth overall:	32.26 m
Draught (max):	18.00 m
Gross tonnage:	33.042
Net tonnage:	19.132
Engine rating:	8.824 kW bei 124 rpm
Main engine:	STX MAN B&W 6S50MC-C
Speed:	12 kts; empty
Hull material:	Steel
Hull construction:	Double hull
Minimum safe manning	16

<sup>1</sup> Source: BSU (Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation)

### 1.3 Voyage particulars

Port of departure:	Antwerpen (Belgium)
Port of call:	Bremerhaven (Germany)
Type of voyage:	Merchant shipping/international
Cargo information:	WPC <sup>2</sup> , BPC <sup>3</sup> , Screen printing plates, feed grade pellets
Manning:	21
Draught at the time of accident:	D <sub>r</sub> = 9,16 m, D <sub>a</sub> = 9,30 m
Pilot on board:	No
Canal helmsman:	No
Number of passengers:	None

### 1.4 Marine casualty/Incident information

Type of marine casualty:	Serious marine casualty (SC) / Cargo fire
Date/time:	01 April 2022 1747hrs
Location:	Berth in the connecting port of Bremerhaven
Latitude/Longitude:	$\varphi = 53^{\circ}56,8' \text{ N}$ , $\lambda = 08^{\circ}55,2' \text{ E}$
Voyage segment:	In the port and at the pier, respectively
Place on board:	Starting in cargo hold 4 and spreading to cargo holds 3 and 5
Human factor:	Cause not yet determined
Consequences:	Destruction of cargo by fire inside cargo holds 3, 4, 5, and damage inside the cargo holds due to heavy thermal input, extinguishing water and low expansion foam. Environmental damage due to heavy foam.

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<sup>2</sup> WPC: Wood-Plastic-Composite; (here decking boards)

<sup>3</sup> BPC: Bamboo-Plastic-Composite; (here decking boards)

Section of navigational chart DE 4, BSH<sup>4</sup> (INT 1457)

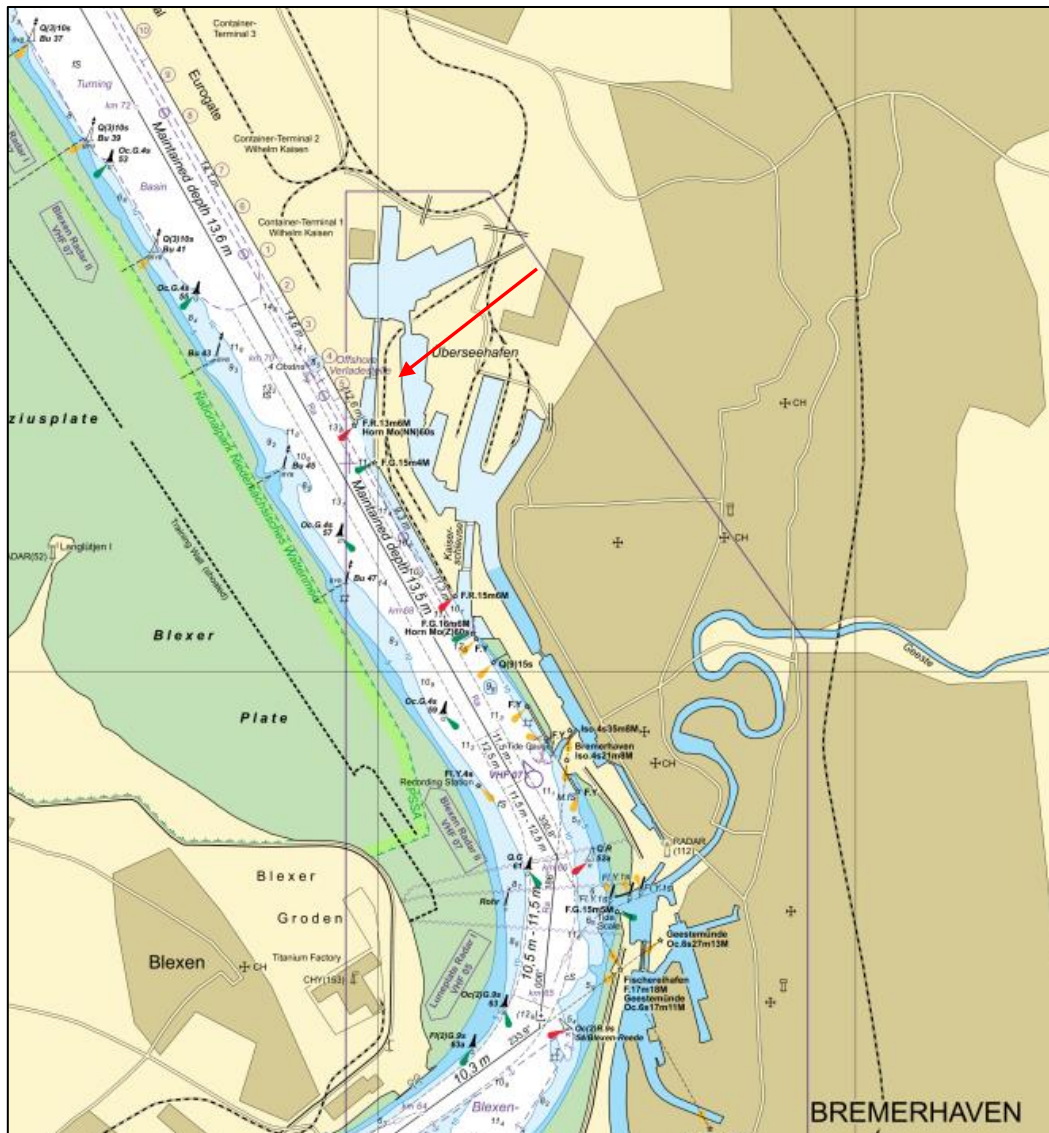


Figure 2: Scene of the accident in the connecting port of Bremerhaven

**1.5 Shore authority involvement and emergency response**

Agencies involved:

- Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME)
- Fire Department Bremerhaven
- THW local group Bremerhaven (oil response team)
- German Meteorological Service (HEARTS-pollutant dispersion calculation<sup>5</sup>)

Resources used:

- NORDERGRÜNDE (motor vessel)

<sup>4</sup> BSH: Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie (Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency)

<sup>5</sup> The HEARTS dispersion program is particularly suitable for damage events lasting several hours or days, because the temporal change in meteorological conditions is also taken into account. The results are graphics in time steps between 20 minutes and 12 hours.

Action taken:

- MELLUM (multi-purpose and water protection vessel)
- Tug BUGSIER 4 and 6
- Tug FLORIAN
- Tug FAIRPLAY 86
- Specialist consultant of the CCME
- Use of an interpreter
- Ambulance
- Introduction of CO<sub>2</sub> into the cargo holds
- Insertion of extinguishing foam into the cargo holds
- Flooding of the cargo holds with water
- Cooling the ship's hull
- Use of „cobra“-extinguishing system
- Wrapping of the ship due to extinguishing foam in the water
- Use of „Cobra“-extinguishing system
- Fire watch

## 2 Summary

On April 1, 2022, at 5:47 p.m., a fire was reported in hold 4 on the Marshall Island-flagged bulker carrier LASCOMBES. At that time, the vessel was moored at the pier in its port of destination in Bremerhaven. The cargo, consisting of wood-plastic composite (WPC), bamboo-plastic composite (BPC), screen-printed wood panels and feed grade pellets, was distributed among five holds in varying quantities.

At the time of the fire outbreak, two stevedores were inside hold 4 and a third stevedore was acting as crane operator in order to lift the cargo packages (WPC und BPC only) ashore. These three people were the first to notice smoke developing, starting from the forward starboard area directly on the hold wall, which was immediately followed by open flames. After ensuring that there were no more persons in the hold, all holds were to be closed and prepared accordingly for the introduction of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The arriving fire department of the fire department Bremerhaven began immediately with the fire fighting and requested at the same time additional resources. Thus a massive inserting of extinguishing water and foam into hold 4 was carried out by the arriving tugboats. In the further course of the operation, which lasted several days, further fires occurred in the adjacent cargo holds 3 and 5 as a result of heat transfer from hold 4. Injecting low expansion foam up to cargo height, cooling of the ship's hull and closing of the cargo holds seemed to have extinguished the fires. However, follow-up checks by opening the hatch covers and thus the renewed introduction of oxygen reignited the fires.

Only massive use of extinguishing water – above the cargo height, cooling measures and low expansion foam were successful after nine days of operation. On 11 April 2022, after a final check, the fire could be reported as extinguished and the scene of operation handed over to the police.

According to the current knowledge, the following circumstances in particular led to the long operation of the rescue forces:

- Design of the cargo holds and stowage of the cargo below the coaming made targeted firefighting difficult.
- Language barrier between the Chinese crew and the German task force (organisation of an interpreter).
- Very strong winds up to 10 Beaufort and thus the danger of low expansion foam blowing into the port water and reigniting of the fire.
- Technical defect of the hydraulic system for opening the cargo holds.
- Incompatibility of the hose connections ship/fire department.
- Temporary lack of foam capacities on the NORDERGRÜNDE.



- Endangerment of a downwind passenger ship due to probable smoke development after opening hold 3.

Due to the fact that the finalization of the unloading and disposal concepts dragged on well into the fall and unloading the LASCOMBES could also not begin until then, the experts and surveyors commissioned for the accident could only begin their work afterwards. At the present time, neither the BSU nor the investigating authorities have any expert reports.

The BSU's investigations, which include the composition of the cargo (cargo components incl. outer packaging), the on-board and shore based firefighting in general, and the detailed analysis of the possible causes of the accident, have not yet been completed due to a lack of data.

Because the one-year deadline for publication, set by the European Union and adopted as national law by the Federal Republic of Germany, cannot be met, the public is informed about the status of the investigations into this serious maritime accident by means of the publication of an interim investigation report.