

Investigation Report No.15/13

Date: 2 October 2014

Serious marine casualty

Collision between the MV CORAL ACE and the MV LISA SCHULTE at the Neue Weser Nord-roadstead on 31 January 2013

1 Summary

Early in the morning of 31 January 2013, two vessels laid up at anchor collided in heavy weather in the Neue Weser Nord-roadstead. The Panama-flagged bulk carrier CORAL ACE had discharged coal in the port of Nordenham on the previous day and then set her anchor in the roadstead. The Cyprus-flagged container ship LISA SCHULTE had already been laid up there at anchor for almost a week in ballast. The CORAL ACE anchored at a distance of about 7 cbl to the west of the LISA SCHULTE.

In the area of the German Bight, the wind picked up from midday of 30 January 2013 and was generally strong to gale force from the south-west. The gusts increased slightly in the evening and the wind veered towards the west. At 1800 , the navigational warnings included a gale warning for the German Bight predicting 8 to 9 Bft.

After midnight, the CORAL ACE started to drift towards the LISA SCHULTE. Gusts of between 41 and 54 kts, equivalent to 9 to 10 Bft, were registered in the area of the roadstead. Significant wave height stood at 4 to 5 m with single waves possibly reaching 7 m. Visibility was between 5 and 10 km.

The officer on watch (OOW) on the LISA SCHULTE called his counterpart on the CORAL ACE on VHF when he noticed that her anchor was not holding her in position any more. The OOW on the CORAL ACE promised to arrange for the engine to be started. As opposed to that of the LISA SCHULTE, the CORAL ACE's engine was not on standby. The distance between the two ships had already dropped to 3 cbl. The CORAL ACE was parallel to the sea, about 90° to the wind, and rolling heavily. The collision occurred shortly afterwards.

Nobody came to physical harm. Water ingress occurred on both ships. Buoyancy was not adversely affected by this and there was no water pollution. The water pollution control ship MELLUM was ordered to proceed to the casualty vessels. It was not possible to take action at the scene because of the weather. As events unfolded, the German Central Command for Maritime Emergencies assumed overall control of the operation.

Escorted by the MELLUM, the CORAL ACE moved to the Südwestkai in Wilhelmshaven. The LISA SCHULTE moved to the Voslapp-roadstead.

2 Safety Recommendations

The following safety recommendations do not constitute a presumption of blame or liability in respect of type, number or sequence.

2.1 Owner of the CORAL ACE

The investigating authorities recommend that the owner of the CORAL ACE train the master and officers in charge of the navigational watch in respect of effective precautionary measures and ordinary practice of seamen when setting anchor in an open sea area.

2.2 Owner of the CORAL ACE

The investigating authorities recommend that the owner of the CORAL ACE train the crew in English, the working language required on board, in particular in respect of the IMO's standard marine communication phrases for VHF radio traffic.

2.3 Owner of the CORAL ACE

The investigating authorities recommend that the owner of the CORAL ACE replace the existing plates containing warnings and operating instructions at the windlasses with ones that are legible.