

Investigation Report No. 289/12

Date: 18 November 2014

Serious marine casualty

Ground contact by the oil tanker KATJA in the River Jade on 14 August 2012

1 Summary

The oil tanker KATJA, flying the flag of the Bahamas, was sailing from Hound Point in Scotland to Wilhelmshaven in Germany. The KATJA was laden with some 87,000 t of crude oil.

A German sea pilot went on board on the evening of 13 August 2012. A 5 to 6 Bft wind from the south east prevailed and visibility was good. The voyage through the German Bight towards the Jade fairway passed without any problems. After reaching pair of buoys 3/4 on the Jade, the speed of the ship was increased to 'full ahead sea'. The KATJA was proceeding against the ebb current at between 8 kts speed over ground and 9.5 to 10 kts speed through water.

The deck officers changed watch at midnight. The master had command of the ship. In addition to the pilot, a helmsman was also on the bridge. Shore-based radar guidance was also provided. The KATJA passed pair of buoys 17/18 at 0031. After the course alteration, her starboard side was on the western edge of the dedicated corridor. At 0040, some 250 m before the next course alteration, the ebb current increasingly acted on the KATJA and she only managed 7.5 kts speed over ground and 9 kts speed through water, despite proceeding at full speed ahead. Although the course of 164° recommended by the pilot was set after pair of buoy 19/20, the ship was displaced considerably to starboard due to the current. At 0043, the KATJA was almost one beam outside the western corridor. Since sand regularly accumulates in the area to the east of Minsener Oog Island, the existing water depth outside the dedicated corridor was not sufficient for the KATJA's draught of 13.45 m. At 0045, the KATJA slowly propelled herself onto the ground. However, the ship's bottom remained intact, meaning no oil escaped. Jade Traffic coordinated the initial emergency response.

It was not possible to refloat the ship without assistance. Initial attempts at towage started at 0222. These were unsuccessful, however. Therefore, it was decided to wait for high tide. The Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME) assumed overall control of the operation at 0230. At 0618, the KATJA refloated again and continued her voyage to Wilhelmshaven, where she made fast at 1218.

There was no marine pollution.

2 SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

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

2.1 Pilot Station Wilhelmshaven

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that Pilot Station Wilhelmshaven use appropriate means to ensure that sea pilots engaged in the pilotage area have access to the latest sounding charts at all times.

2.2 Ship's management of Motor Tanker KATJA

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the ship's management of Motor Tanker KATJA urge its ship's commands to include advising pilots in communication for the duration of the voyage by way of effective bridge team management. If information is not made available in the language used on board, then this should be actively requested.