

Investigation Report No. 330/13

Date: 15 March 2016

Serious marine casualty

Collision between the MT CORAL IVORY and MV SIDERFLY on 28 October 2013 in the Kiel Canal

1 Summary

At about 0256¹ on 28 October 2013, the Dutch-registered LPG² tanker CORAL IVORY and the cargo ship SIDERFLY, flying the flag of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, collided in the Kiel Canal west of the viaduct at Brunsbüttel. The ammonia-laden CORAL IVORY had left her berth in Landeshafen Ostermoor (inland port of Ostermoor), located to the south of the canal route, a few minutes beforehand and started to turn into the Kiel Canal towards Kiel. Despite the use of her bow thruster, the ship moved too far into the northern part of the canal during this manoeuvre and collided with the oncoming SIDERFLY, which was sailing towards Brunsbüttel.

An astern manoeuvre enabled the CORAL IVORY to part from the other vessel shortly after the collision happened. The CORAL IVORY only sustained minor damage during the accident and was able to return to the inland port of Brunsbüttel under her own steam afterwards.

The shell plating of the SIDERFLY, fully laden with nitrogenous fertiliser, was torn open below the waterline during the collision. The inflowing sea water caused a steadily increasing list, which exposed the ship to an acute risk of foundering.

External assistance for the heavily damaged SIDERFLY was requested from the bridges of the CORAL IVORY and the SIDERFLY immediately after the accident on VHF radio. It was possible to take four crew members ashore a few minutes after the collision with the help of a work boat belonging to a nearby ship. The remaining five crew members and the pilot were taken safely on board a pilot tender that had rushed to the distressed vessel shortly afterwards.

Two tugs that had arrived at the scene of the accident shortly after the collision managed to push the SIDERFLY, which had drifted some 0.3 nm eastwards in the meantime, temporarily against the northern canal embankment and prevent the ship, which was listing at more than 20 degrees to the port side, from foundering.

A huge technical effort in the hours and days that followed made it possible to first stabilise the distressed vessel on the northern canal embankment and then make her temporarily buoyant.

The Kiel Canal had to be closed completely and later partly for the very complex process involved in securing the SIDERFLY for a total of three days. The SIDERFLY was shifted to the port of Brunsbüttel on 6 November 2013. After unsuccessful attempts to sell the ship, which was greatly in need of repair, she began her last voyage on 5 February 2014 when she was towed to the ship breaking yard.

¹ All times shown in this report are local = CET = UTC + 1 hour.

² LPG: Liquid petroleum gas.

2 SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The Kiel Canal I Pilots' Association

2.1.1 The importance of traffic flow control radio messages

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Kiel Canal I Pilots' Association raise awareness among its pilots during in-service training and/or by written information of the importance of radio messages sent in the course of traffic flow control by VTS Kiel Canal. Insofar as they contain stipulations that involve starting, interrupting or continuing a canal passage, then they are 'shipping police orders', which the ship's commands and pilots of the vessels concerned must comply with.

2.1.2 Communication between pilot and ship's command

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Kiel Canal I Pilots' Association urge its pilots during in-service training and/or by written information to make available any information of importance to the vessel under pilotage to the party on the bridge responsible for the ship's command. It is especially important to ensure that ship's commands which understand only a little German or none at all are always aware of the content and outcome of radio communications held in German.

2.2 Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping

2.2.1 Monitoring of radio communications by the VTS

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping review and where necessary optimise the operational procedures for monitoring traffic at VTS Kiel Canal. In particular, there should be an assessment as to whether with reasonable effort it is possible technically and from an organisational perspective for the nautical supervisor or assistant in charge of traffic flow control, as the case may be, to monitor VHF channels 12 (Kiel Canal IV) and 13 (Kiel Canal I). In terms of traffic flow control, this would make it possible to respond more rapidly if the content of any ship/ship communication is not consistent with their instructions.

2.2.2 Changing the VHF communication from duplex to simplex

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping (GDWS) examines the possibility of changing over the duplex-VHF channels VTS–ship and ship–VTS, serving the communication, to the simplex-channel.

2.2.3 Signalling system at the exit of the Landeshafen Ostermoor

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping examines the the possibility of installing a signalling system at the exit of Landeshafen Ostermoor, which is integrated with the traffic flow planning of the Kiel Canal's traffic flow control system with regard to an enhancement of safety of the traffic connection of the Landeshafen Ostermoor to the Kiel Canal.