

Investigation Reports No. 455/15 and 58/16

Date: 28.05.2018

Serious marine casualty

Charcoal cargo fire on the container vessels MSC KATRINA in the Elbe estuary on 20 November 2015 and LUDWIGSHAFEN EXPRESS in the Red Sea on 21 February 2016

1 Summary

Fires broke out in containers loaded with charcoal in bulk on the Panamanian-flagged MSC KATRINA and on the German-flagged LUDWIGSHAFEN EXPRESS. In each case, the cargo originated in the island of Borneo, Indonesia, and was destined for the same consignee in France.

The MSC KATRINA was in the Elbe estuary when the smoke detection system discovered the fire, meaning the Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (CCME) was able to arrange for the deployment of specially trained firefighters. It was possible to extinguish the fire with no damage to the ship and only minor damage to the cargo. The container affected by the fire was situated within a free-standing stack in the cargo hold, making it easier to fight the fire.

The LUDWIGSHAFEN EXPRESS was sailing in the Red Sea when the outbreak of fire was noticed during an inspection. Consequently, firefighting was incumbent upon the crew on its own. The affected container was stowed directly on a hatch cover, making it possible to extinguish the fire quickly using the equipment available on board. Neither the ship nor other cargo sustained any damage.

Due to the similarity of the cause of the fire, the investigation of the two cases was summarised in one investigation report.

2 Safety Recommendations

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

2.1 Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure call on the committees of the International Maritime Organization to amend the regulations of the IMDG Code in order to prevent the ignition of charcoal that is not classified as class 4.2 dangerous goods, during the sea voyage.

2.2 Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure call on the committees of the International Maritime Organization to consider stowage requirements that ensure that any type of self-heating substance is always transported on deck with sufficient accessibility.

2.3 Ship owner: Mediterranean Shipping Company

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that Mediterranean Shipping Company state in its procedural instructions and guidelines pertaining to cargo that self-heating substances carried in containers should always be transported on deck with sufficient accessibility.

2.4 Ship owner: Orient Overseas Container Line

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that Orient Overseas Container Line forward information on cargo to partners within the slot charter agreement even if it does not constitute dangerous goods but poses a heightened risk, such as that of self-heating.