

Investigation Report No. 32/19

Date: 16.01.2020

Serious marine casualty

Grounding of MV BORE BANK after steering gear failure

level with buoy 18 in the Rostock sea channel on 17 January 2019

1 Summary

The Finnish-flagged Ro-Ro/ship BORE BANK was en route from Kotka in Finland to Rostock on 17 January 2019. The pilot boarded in the morning at 0530 and the sea channel passage began. At 0547, the pilot noticed that he could not steer the ship and asked the third officer to take over the manual steering. The third officer then switched over but found he was unable to steer the ship with that, either. The rudder failed to respond.

The master then took hold of the joystick, with which everything is overwritten, and set the rudder to hard to port. The BORE BANK actually started to turn to port. Since the sea channel's eastern breakwater was already extremely close to the bow, the master and the pilot quickly decided – as demanded by the situation – that compensating for the turn to port would reportedly be too dangerous because the ship would strike the breakwater when she turned starboard back into the fairway. Consequently, the port turn was not interrupted and the BORE BANK's fore section ran aground.

The crew could not find any damage. Both the main engine and the steering gear operated properly.

The pilot informed VTS Warnemünde that the ship had run aground and requested tugs.

The first tug (Bugsier 16) reached the BORE BANK at 0625. At 0645, the Bugsier 16 made fast at the bow and the Fairplay 6, which had arrived in the meantime, at the stern. A third tug was ordered because the first attempt at 0700 failed.

The Fairplay 12 also made fast at the stern at 0738 and the BORE BANK was refloated at 0740 with the assistance of her main engine.

The BORE BANK made fast at the pier at 0900 with the support of the tugs and the loading and unloading operation as well as the investigation into this accident began.

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 urge the IMO to supplement SOLAS with an internal error logging requirement for steering gear, which should be analysed with the aim of minimising future steering gear failures and thus increasing safety at sea.

2.2 Owner

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the owner ensure replacement crews are sufficiently familiarised with the technology of the ship they are to take charge of. Amongst other things, this should include in-service training and courses, as well as a comprehensive handover on board by the previous crew.