

Investigation Report No. 261/20

Date: 30 November 2022

Less Serious marine casualty

Fire in the engine room on board the ferry BERLIN in the access to the port of Rostock on 13 August 2020

1 Summary

On 13 August 2020, the German flagged ferry BERLIN was en route to the port of Rostock as usual. At about 0245¹, when she was in the approach fairway about 2.6 nm from the sea channel, a fire broke out in the main engine room. The cause was determined to be material fatigue of a pressure gauge pipe that could not have been foreseen. It had broken, releasing a jet of gear oil onto insufficiently insulated engine parts, where it predictably ignited.

As the fire was initially very limited, three crewmembers spontaneously started manual firefighting. A few minutes later, the ship's command sounded the general alarm, and all necessary measures were initiated.

As early as 15:14, the fire could be reported as extinguished.

To be on the safe side, the hybrid ferry continued her journey to the berth in Rostock harbour using only her diesel-electric drive. There, all passengers were able to leave the ship unharmed. There was a manageable amount of damage in the fire area, and the three firefighting crewmembers complained of a throat irritation, which was treated by a medical response team.

This investigation revealed that there is no mandatory monitoring obligation for the "hot spot" regulations that have been in place for years.

The shipping company promptly and comprehensively corrected the shortcomings in firefighting and technical deficiencies that this report revealed.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all times shown in this report are local: CEST (UTC + 2 hours).

2 Safety Recommendation

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

2.1 German Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Federal Ministry for Digital Affairs and Transport ensure the fastest possible implementation of the current MSC regulations for the prevention of fires in engine and pump rooms (MSC1.Circ.1321).

2.2 Lloyd's Register

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the classification society Lloyds Register develop internal regulations to ensure that periodic surface temperature inspections are carried out in accordance with the current MSC-Rs by means of thermographic inspections after newbuilding and repairs, as well as for class surveys.

2.3 Lloyd's Register (IACS)

The Federal Bureau of Marine Accident Investigation recommends that the classification society Lloyds Register, in accordance with the IACS Guidelines on Marine Accident Investigation Reports No.3, carry out its own assessment of the safety recommendations referred to here and, if necessary, draw up proposals for amendments to IACS resolutions and forward them to the GENERAL POLICY GROUP (GPG) for consideration.

It would be desirable to ensure that all members are made aware of the periodic inspection of surface temperatures, based on the current MSC regulations, if possible by a thermographic inspection, after new construction and repair as well as for the class survey.