



PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION SUMMARY FOR WEBPAGE

(1)

Type of Investigation: Preliminary

Type of Casualty: Serious

Event: Sinking

Summary: A lines boat on standby for the shifting of a foreign fishing vessel sank at the Suva main wharf on 21st August 2013. The incident happened when the foreign fishing vessel grounded whilst shifting and the Lines boat was instructed by the Port Operator to pull out the grounded vessel i.e. foreign fishing vessel. Whilst pulling, the grounded vessel immediately made a full thrust astern with the Lines boat's lines still intact which caused the latter to sink. The linesboat crew managed to jump over into the bigger boat whilst the Master was caught and went down with the linesboat but managed to swim out and was rescued by a fiberglass boat.

Finding: MSAF found that the Port Operator is not adhering to legislation that requires engagement of Pilots on all foreign vessels entering or departing ports and movements within port boundaries. Linesboat should not be used as a tugboat. The Master of the foreign fishing vessel should be aware of his own capability and ask for assistance and Shipping Agent should closely liaise with the Master to be able to determine the need for assistance. In this case a Tugboat should have been engaged to assist. The language barrier where the Master could not understand what the crews of the Lines boat were yelling to him.

Recommended Safety Action: MSAF has issued a directive to all Shipping Agents to ensure that they engage Pilots when foreign vessels under their charge enter or depart port and movements within port area. In addition to ensure that Interpreter is engaged if the Master does not speak English. MSAF has issued instruction to Port Operator to ensure proper tug is used to assist with berthing, un-berthing and relocation within port boundary. MSAF has also instructed the Lines boat owner that the boat is restricted to linesboat only and should not at any time act as a tug.

Safety message: This accident highlights the importance of adhering to legislation and use of proper working mechanism, in this case a proper tug for maneuvering within the port boundary.

(2)

Type of Investigation: Preliminary

Type of Casualty: Serious

Event: Grounding

Summary: On the night of Wednesday 29th May 2013, the passenger/cargo vessel struck a reef whilst maneuvering towards Lomaloma anchorage in Vanuabalavu. There were 21 crew and 57 passengers onboard however, there was no casualty.

Findings: MSAF found there was a change of Master and Chief Engineer on that trip. There was no evidence of a familiarization phase onboard when the changeover took place. Both the Master and Chief Engineer lack information of the tactical behavior and maneuvering characteristic of the vessel with variable pitch when in adverse weather condition. The track which the vessel followed from Tonga passage to Lomaloma is the shortest but not recommended for night voyage due to the absence of navigational marks. GPS cannot be relied on in that area of water. It is the Master's call i.e. to decide whether it is safe to go through that passage at night.

Recommended Safety Action: MSAF has issued a notice to all Masters not to use that Tongan passage at night due to the absence of navigational aid in that area. Vessel Owner instructed to adopt a familiarization and handing over procedure. That has to be well documented onboard and adhered to as and when there is a changeover of command or Officers. Disciplinary action was taken against the Master as his action placed the lives of the passengers and crew at risk.

Safety message: It is important for Masters to take into consideration the weather condition and other factors such as navigational aid when navigating through an area such as the Tongan passage or any other area for that matter.

(3)

Type of investigation: Preliminary

Type of Casualty: Very Serious

Event: Collision / Death of passenger

Summary: On Thursday 15th May 2014 at 1748 hours in the evening a tourist died and the Master injured when their vessel was hit by another vessel at Castaway Island reefs along the eastern coast of Mana Island. The tourist who was on a fishing trip was a passenger on the vessel and while rounding off the fishing trip at Eastern point the Master slowed engine revolution to idle speed to allow the two passengers to heave in their fishing lines. On lookout the Master spotted another vessel heading towards his vessel at a considerable speed however he did not move because his two passengers were heaving fishing lines. On realizing that the other vessel was still heading straight towards them and would collide from his starboard side he then turned his vessel to starboard and at that moment in time the other vessel was at very close quarters and just chipped the portside of their vessel hitting the tourist and the Master on the flare of its bow.

Finding: The vessel carrying the tourist was registered but out of survey whilst the other vessel was neither survey nor registered. The Master of the other vessel's negligence and disregard of the rules of the road and as such not a fit and proper person therefore should not be a holder of a Master's Certificate of Competency.

Recommended Safety Action: Both Masters disciplined and both vessel owners instructed not to operate vessel until such time they are surveyed and in compliance with the current legislation.

Safety message: Alertness is very important and each & every Master should be on alert at all times whilst in command of a vessel.

(4)

Type of Investigation: Preliminary

Type of Casualty: Serious

Event: Grounding

Summary: A cruise vessel grounded whilst departing the main wharf at Lautoka on 11/02/14. On leaving the eastern side of the main wharf the vessel had little room to maneuver and had to back out all the way until she reached the end of the wharf. The vessel gave a wider berth than expected on leaving the wharf and was pushed further to port by a fresh north-westerly wind. The sternward movement was not counteracted until the port propeller made contact with an underwater obstruction.

Finding: The cause of the grounding was human error.

Recommended Safety Action: Port Operator instructed to have an underwater survey of the area and relevant navigational mark of an obstruction to be erected at the shipping channel.

Safety Message: Master to be fully alert at all times taking into consideration the wind direction. Bridge Resource Management skills is essential.

(5)

Type of Investigation: Preliminary

Type of Casualty: Less Serious

Event: Overturned Vehicle on the vehicle deck on Roll on Roll off Passenger Vessel.

Summary: The vehicle deck was fully loaded when the vessel departed its last destination for Suva. The truck was parked on the centre lane on the vehicle deck facing forward. On her left was the three ton truck facing aft and to her right was another five ton truck. The three trucks were the nearest to the stern ramp of the vessel. As the vessel turned at Nasilai point on her starboard side the truck overturned on her right and accidentally crushed the three ton truck. As the vessel was close to its destination the crew waited till the vessel berth alongside the wharf to clear the vessels and dragged out the crushed vessel.

Findings: The truck was overloaded and was not properly lashed. Due to instability and lack of proper securing devise, the movement of the vessel in the seaway caused the accident.

Recommended Safety Action: Vessel owner advised to put in place a standard operation procedure that includes cargo securing manual.

Safety Message: it is important for vessel Owner /Operator to ensure that appropriate cargo securing manual is in place for their vessels.
