

SUMMARY

The general cargo vessel KERTU was on a voyage from Bålsta, Sweden to Finland with pilot on board. Shortly after the pilot had left the vessel in bad weather with rough seas inside the compulsory pilotage line, she grounded hard at a speed of 9.8 knots. The area's VTS centre understood what had occurred and made contact with the vessel, which had not requested any assistance at this point. The VTS¹ then raised the alarm with the Swedish Maritime Administration's joint rescue coordination central (JRCC²), the Swedish Transport Agency and the Swedish Coast Guard. The VTS (which is part of the Maritime Administration) also raised the alarm with other functions within the Maritime Administration.

After some hours on the ground, the master of the vessel called the Coast Guard and JRCC and informed them that the vessel was leaking diesel oil. The Coast Guard sent one of its vessels to the site of the accident and established that there was a smell of diesel and that the vessel was manoeuvring with its engine running. No inspector from the Transport Agency nor a pilot was sent to the location. The master of KERTU has stated that, in addition to the two occasions on which he was in contact with the VTS and the one occasion he made contact himself with the Coast Guard and the JRCC, the vessel was not contacted by any government authorities during the first four hours after the grounding.

After being aground for four hours, the vessel manoeuvred itself afloat and set a course towards an anchorage out at sea south of Landsort. After a two-hour voyage, KERTU anchored and 30 minutes later, the vessel advised that water was leaking into the cargo hold and that the water level was two metres and rising. Subsequently, the JRCC changed the classification from NIL³ to distress and the crew, with the exception of the master and the chief engineer, were evacuated to a nearby coast guard vessel. By this time, seven hours had passed since the grounding occurred and the vessel's situation was critical and there was a high risk that it would capsize. In conjunction with the evacuation, it appears that the Transport Agency, in practice, began a MAS operation⁴. Following this, a major effort was undertaken to prevent the vessel capsizing, primarily using units from the Coast Guard at the location alongside KERTU in consultation with the Transport Agency's marine inspectors, who participated from shore. While the operation was taking place, the Coast Guard organised several consultation meetings with the county administrative board and municipality concerned.

The situation was stabilised after several hours. The vessel was promised a berth in the Port of Oxelösund and a salvage coordinator engaged by the shipping company arrived on board and the vessel was then towed to the quay in Oxelösund. The impact resulted in major damage to the vessel and, after temporary reinforcement work lasting several weeks by the quay in Oxelösund, the vessel was considered as total loss and was towed to a yard to be scrapped. No one was physically harmed in connection with the accident or during the rescue operation.

¹VTS – Vessel Traffic Service – the Maritime Administration's information centres for maritime traffic.

²JRCC – Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, the air-sea rescue centre.

³NIL – Used when the rescue coordinator assesses that the alarm is not reliable or that nothing which constitutes a threat to human life has, or may have, happened, i.e. not a search and rescue situation.

⁴MAS – maritime assistance service. The purpose of this type of function is to be a point of contact between a vessel that, while not in distress at sea, is in need of assistance and various authorities concerned as well as to monitor and track the vessel's situation.

SHK concludes that the grounding was caused by unclear communication concerning the vessel's position and future route in conjunction with the disembarkation of the pilot, combined with misunderstanding between the master and the officer on watch on board.

In addition, SHK concludes that the subsequent sequence of events was close to leading to loss of the vessel and action could have been taken to reduce this risk. The fact that the Transport Agency did not act in accordance with its own routine descriptions in the first ten hours, following the grounding influenced events negatively and hindered the actions of other authorities and organisations.

When the Transport Agency's MAS function well began to act, this was a factor which, together with the Coast Guard's operational effort, came to be crucial to save the ship from sinking.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

Hansa Shipmanagement Ltd. is recommended to:

- Actively follow up and improve procedures for safe route planning and communication on the bridge, both with and without a pilot on board. See section: 2.3. (*RS2016:10 R1*)

The Swedish Maritime Administration is recommended to:

- Actively follow up procedures and training regarding disembarkation of pilots and guidance from pilot boats, combined with the conditions for tracking inside of the compulsory pilotage lines from the VTS, where possible. See sections: 2.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.4, 2.6.1, 2.6.4. (*RS2016:10 R2*)
- Actively follow up procedures and training for staff at the JRCC regarding communication with vessels at risk, weather conditions, classification of cases and risk analyses in conjunction with serious maritime accidents. See sections: 2.5, 2.6.1, 2.7. (*RS2016:10 R3*)
- Consider and evaluate the appropriate number of VHF channels during pilotage and appropriate communications between vessel and pilot boat during the embarkation and disembarkation of a pilot. See sections: 2.2.1, 2.6.2. (*RS2016:10 R4*)
- Consider and evaluate the feasibility and advantages of clearly visualising the compulsory pilotage lines in relevant publications. See section: 2.6.3. (*RS2016:10 R5*)

The Swedish Coast Guard is recommended to:

- Evaluate and consider the installation of recording functionality with respect to all communications at its control centres. See section: 2.9.1. (*RS2016:10 R6*)

The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended to:

- Taking this report into consideration, conclude its ongoing operational analysis regarding maritime supervision in conjunction with major maritime accidents, taking particular account of factors that may have an impact on maritime safety. See sections: 2.6.1, 2.10, 2.10.1, 2.10.2. (*RS2016:10 R7*)
- Evaluate and consider clearer internal procedures and training, primarily with respect to functions and organisation in conjunction with maritime accidents. See sections: 2.6.1, 2.10, 2.10.1, 2.10.2. (*RS2016:10 R8*)
- Ensure that the Transport Agency maintains around-the-clock readiness for using marine inspectors and MAS with the relevant expertise in the event of maritime accidents in Swedish waters. See sections: 2.6.1, 2.10, 2.10.1, 2.10.2. (*RS2016:10 R9*)

The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended, in consultation with the Swedish Maritime Administration and the Swedish Coast Guard, to:

- Work out clearer common procedures and working practices, primarily those pertaining to the MAS function in the event of major maritime accidents. See sections: 2.9.1, 2.10.1, 2.7. (*RS2016:10 R10*)
- Introduce, in an appropriate manner, regular joint exercises concerning major maritime accidents. See section: 2.1. (*RS2016:10 R11*)

The Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation is recommended to:

- Evaluate applicable legislation concerning vessels port of refuge, particularly as regards the authority to order a port to accept a vessel in distress and financial guarantees for ports. See section: 2.11. (*RS2016:10 R12*)
- Evaluate applicable legislation concerning MAS, protected places and vessels in need of assistance. See section: 2.10.1. (*RS2016:10 R13*)

The Ministry of Justice is recommended to:

- Evaluate applicable legislation concerning the boundary between central government and municipal responsibility for the fire and rescue service in ports and channels in conjunction with maritime accidents. See section: 2.11.1. (*RS2016:10 R14*)