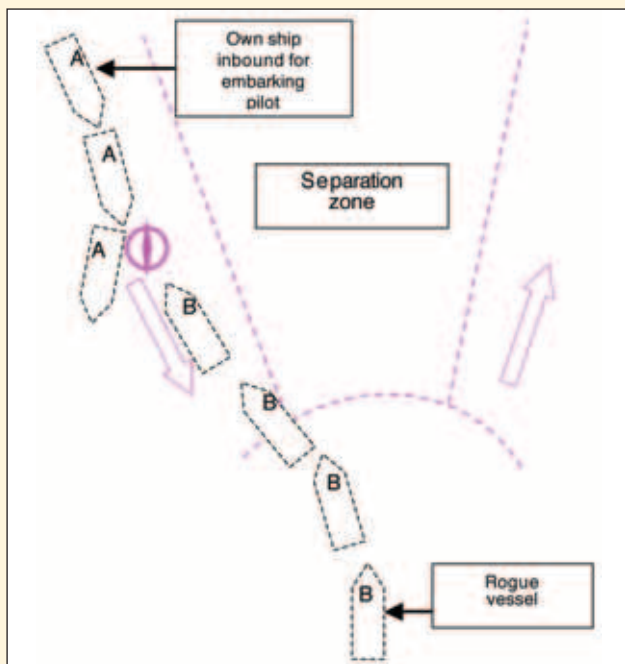


### MARS 200866

#### Traffic lane violation

Our inbound vessel was approaching the pilot station, just off the harbour entrance, by day and in clear weather. There is a clearly marked and well-known traffic separation scheme leading to the port (see sketch below). A large outbound container vessel disembarked the pilot inside the breakwaters and, instead of following the north-bound lane, proceeded to come up the opposite way along the south-bound traffic lane. With a distance of less than one mile between our two rapidly-closing vessels, we executed an emergency turn to starboard with engine going full ahead. Collision was averted by only 80 metres.



### MARS 200867

#### Hazards of scrap iron cargoes

Source: Gard Loss Prevention Circular no. 06-07

From time to time there have been problems in connection with export sales of scrap metal from Russia. The war in North Caucasus (Chechnya) has for some time been a source of scrap metal. Tons of military steel therefore arrive at the sea ports mixed with standard / commercial scrap and it has proved difficult to recognise military parts in the heaps of scrap intended for loading on to ships. In addition, other hazards are mixed in with the metal scrap such as wire balls, tin sheets and metal cuttings / shavings / turnings, with the latter also being subject to self-ignition.

Export scrap is usually covered by safety declarations and quality certificates with reference to Russian state standard 3A. Masters should insist on being provided with the description and dimensions of the pieces to be loaded. They should also instruct the crew as to the types of cargo which can be loaded and which cargo must be rejected.

We also refer to *Gard News* 159, September/November 2000, 'Warning: scrap metal from Russia' and the recommendations set out in this article:

1. Request shippers (forwarders) to provide a detailed description of the scrap to be loaded.
2. Arrange a 24-hour watch near the holds in order to check the cargo in each load.
3. Stop loading immediately if any suspicious military parts or non-standard pieces are noticed.
4. Send a letter of protest to all parties concerned (in the first instance to the local harbour master, who is responsible for the ship's safety) against loading dangerous/improper cargo.
5. Request that any dangerous pieces of cargo be removed from the ship's holds.

**Editor's note:** Recently containerised steel scrap from West Asia to India contained several pieces of live artillery shells, rockets and military ordnance. At least two instances of explosions that caused fatalities to workers destuffing the containers have been recorded.

### MARS 200868

#### Controllable pitch propeller systems

Official report: abridged from USCG Alert No. 3-2008

A recent marine casualty involving a large fishing vessel resulted in multiple fatalities and loss of the vessel. Based on the survivors' testimony, the crew experienced difficulty with launching and entering the three liferafts because the vessel was making considerable sternway when the order to abandon ship was issued. Evidence indicates the main engine was still running with the propeller remaining in astern pitch. Consequently, two of the liferafts quickly drifted past the bow of the vessel soon after they were launched. Attempts to retrieve the liferafts using the painter lines were unsuccessful.

As a result, most of the crew members were forced to jump into the near freezing water and attempt to swim to the liferafts. Ultimately, only 22 got into the liferafts. All these crew members survived. Of the other 25 who never made it into a liferaft, four died and one remains missing.

The Coast Guard *strongly recommends* that owners, operators, and masters of vessels with controllable pitch propellers (CPP) understand the design and operation of the system. This includes the primary and emergency sources of power for both the control and main systems, the location and procedures for using alternate control stations, and the locations of the emergency shutdowns. While controllable pitch propeller systems are generally designed and constructed to fail in the 'as is' position, in hydraulic CPP systems, the actual blade pitch may change. In this case the vessel was making considerable sternway.

In light of this incident, vessel owners, operators, masters and crew members should also be mindful of the following safety issues:

1. Shipmasters and officers must maintain situational awareness at all times and understand the effects of their actions and decisions on the safety of their crew, especially during emergency situations involving flooding. This includes understanding what impact the vessel's speed, heading, heel, and trim will have on the crew as it abandons ship.
2. The master or individual in charge must evaluate the particular circumstances of each emergency situation (weather, seas, experience of crew, condition of vessel etc) and adjust emergency procedures accordingly to provide for the safety of the crew, vessel, and the environment.
3. All crew members should understand that immersion suits will affect their dexterity, limit mobility, and may make it more difficult to launch survival craft, particularly when the survival craft are covered with snow or ice. Crew members responsible for launching the survival craft should practise and be able to launch with their immersion suits on. Lifesaving gear should be kept free of ice and snow whenever possible.
4. When abandoning ship, crew members should make every effort to enter directly into a liferaft or lifeboat before entering the water. If crew members must enter the water, they should stay together and attempt to enter a liferaft, climb on to floating debris, or use any other means available to get themselves out of the water as soon as possible.
5. Emergency drills should not be limited to routine procedures such as donning immersion suits. Emergency drills should ensure all crew members, including bridge and engine room personnel, understand and practise what to do in various emergency situations under actual conditions. Additional information regarding emergency procedures for commercial fishing vessels can be found at: <http://www.fishsafe.info>

## **MARS 200869**

### **Bunker hose rupture and pollution**

One of our vessels experienced a failure of bunker hose while bunkering. As a result, about five barrels of fuel oil were spilt on the bunker barge deck, vessel's ship side and the area around the ship's manifold, while some oil was noticed to have gone in the water.

The bunker hose failed very close to the manifold of the bunker barge. The hose had been sighted by the second engineer prior to starting the bunkering operation and he reported it to be in apparently good condition. However

without detailed examination, it would have not been possible to determine any existing faults in the hose, especially at the end that was connected to the barge's manifold.

The ship's engineers kept a record of manifold pressure during the bunkering operation and ensured the pressure remained steady and within safe limits without any pressure surge. It was also confirmed that there was no mis-operation of tank and line valves at any time.

### **Lessons learned**

1. Always verify that the bunker hose to be used by the supply barge is accompanied by a valid test certificate before commencement of the bunkering operation.
2. When lining up for bunkering, confirm that the bunker tank filling valves are fully open according to the bunkering plan.

## **MARS 200870**

### **Gangway accidents**

Recently we had two accidents involving shore personnel, due to improper maintenance and rigging of portable gangways.

On one of the vessels, even though the main gangway (accommodation ladder) was in use, a portable gangway, without proper guard rails, was temporarily rigged aft from the accommodation deck. This was to facilitate easy access for the ship's personnel to continuously monitor the after-draft while cargo loading was nearing completion. A stevedore used this access to board the vessel; however during his passage, some of the railings became dislodged due to their poor condition and caused him to fall and sustain severe injuries.

On another vessel, the portable gangway was half withdrawn and left unsecured while the regular gangway was being rigged. A stevedore, trying to disembark the vessel via the unsecured gangway, caused it to fall into the water, while he himself fell on to the wharf and suffered serious injuries.

It is the responsibility of the vessel to provide safe access at all times. Lack of maintenance or unsafe rigging of gangways will be construed as gross negligence on the part of the responsible officers on board.

Portable gangways must be used only after careful consideration. They must also receive the same level of safety precautions, inspections and maintenance as that given to the regular accommodation and pilot ladders. All repairs must be documented and the gangway must be tested after repairs, if practicable.

## **MARS 200871**

### **Cargo residues pollution claim**

Recently one of our vessels discharged bulk alumina at a north European port. About 40 tonnes of damaged cargo was found in nos.1 and 2 holds and after completion of the necessary formalities, this was disposed of into a barge. An official disposal certificate was issued by the authorities but there was no mention that the cargo removed was damaged. The chief officer entered the amount in the garbage record book and attached the disposal certificate.

The vessel departed with all four holds containing nominal quantities of cargo residues. As the vessel was to load grain

from a port nearby, hold washing operations were started immediately on departure. Wash water was also being pumped out during the passage.

The washing of 1 and 2 holds were completed at sea. As the vessel anchored off the load port, awaiting berth, the cleaning of 3 and 4 holds was in progress. The sweepings from 3 and 4 holds were stored in some drums and slings on deck for later disposal at sea, as the vessel was inside a special area. The drums and slings were open and there was also some cargo spillage on the deck.

The water police boarded the vessel at anchorage and alleged that the vessel was violating Marpol regulations by discharging cargo residues and wash water overboard. Upon berthing at the load port, further investigations and scrutiny of documents were carried out. Due to the entry in the garbage record book, the authorities at first concluded that sweepings from no. 1 and 2 holds amounted to 40 tonnes so logically, the sweepings from 3 and 4 holds should also have been about 40 tonnes – but there were only eight drums on deck with an estimated quantity of about three tonnes.

The authorities concluded that possibly a large quantity of cargo residues from nos. 3 and 4 holds had been illegally discharged overboard by ship's staff within special area or in the anchorage without proper documentation.

Through the P&I club lawyers, it was finally proved that the 40 tonnes landed at the previous discharge port from 1 and 2 holds was in fact 'damaged' cargo and it was a mistake to enter it in the garbage record book without giving the correct details. The vessel was let off with a mild penalty for the inadvertent flow overboard of some cargo on deck along with deck water. However, the wash water pumped overboard in the short sea passage within a special area was not construed as pollution by the authorities.

## Lessons learned

1. Disposal of cargo residues at sea must be done in accordance with Marpol Annex V and must be documented in garbage record book.
2. Hold wash water (even if the cargo is non-pollutant under the International Maritime Dangerous Goods – IMDG – Code) should not be pumped overboard inside a special area unless the coastal authorities permit it.
3. At all times, any cargo residues temporarily stored on deck must be properly covered from rain or water.

**Editor's note:** Masters of dry cargo vessels must anticipate situations when hold cleaning / washing may have to be carried out within special areas or even within territorial waters / harbour limits. Owners, managers, charterers and the coastal states(s) must be informed well in advance and permission must be obtained from the appropriate authorities before commencing hold cleaning and discharge of cargo residues / wash water.

## MARS 200872

### Child molestation charge against crew member

At a north American port, on a Saturday evening, our ship's crew was engaged in lifting provisions on board from the wharf using the ship's stores crane. The delivery truck's crew

consisted of a middle-aged woman and a young male (presumed to be her son, age estimated to be about 15). As this boy was seen to be having some difficulty in moving the heavily laden pallets inside the covered truck's cargo bay to facilitate lifting by ship's gear, one of our seamen climbed in the truck and proceeded to assist him.

Just as the last of the stores was being loaded on board, the truck was surrounded by a convoy of police cars with their lights flashing and sirens blaring. The police officers informed the stunned ship's crew that they had received a telephone call from a woman claiming that her son inside the truck was 'inappropriately touched' by the ship's crew.

I, as master, was incredulous and my belief in my crewman's innocence was further corroborated by other crew members, who had had the pair inside the truck in full view at all times. My attempt to discuss the matter with the woman and the boy were thwarted by their refusal to talk and the police team's wild haste to arrest the panic-stricken seaman. In desperation, I requested for time to contact the company and P&I club correspondent. Having no access to a cell phone on board, I proceeded to call the various ship-interest contacts (local agent, P&I club correspondent, manager etc) on the ship's satcom. To my utter rage and frustration, most of the called parties had put their phones on an answer / voice mail mode, and to add to my misery, the phone connection kept cutting whenever the shore cranes interfered with satcom antenna signal reception.

Until the P&I club representative eventually arrived with a legal assistant at midnight, the crewman was not allowed to speak to anyone, and had been instructed to 'pack his bags' by the police. Finally, in the presence of the lawyer, his oral statement was recorded and a hastily-written statement accepted; but we could not prevent his disembarkation and transfer to a jail, pending a hearing.

The ship sailed later the next morning, and being on a liner service, returned to the same port after six weeks. We were shocked to learn from our agent that the crewman had been held for two weeks pending trial, and then had been deported after the company settled with the woman out of court.

Plainly, this was a frame-up and successful extortion, and an innocent seaman and his family were subject to gross injustice and great mental anguish.

## Lessons learned

1. Ships' crews must be particularly wary of dealing with 'non-professional' personnel, particularly women and minors. Ship chandlers and stores delivery personnel must be required to produce proper identity documents and permits.
2. Ships' crews must be warned that body contact in certain cultures and regions may be inadvertently or even deliberately misinterpreted.
3. In today's ISPS regime, receiving and loading stores are subject to strict procedures. It may be preferable for the ship's crew not to handle any item until the delivery personnel have placed each lift on the wharf under the lifting gear, such that the contents can be visually sighted and verified against proper documents.
4. At every port, the master must insist that the agent provide the ship with a cell phone or other independent and reliable means of communication.

## MARS 200873

### Child pornography on board

On one of our vessels calling at a north American port, a crew member was taken ashore by local police for possession of child pornography. Since such charges have very serious consequences, to the relief of everyone, the crew member was released by the authorities after investigation.

Vessels are being subject to increasingly thorough searches: some customs authorities even insist on full accommodation space searches and scanning through computers and data storage media for illegitimate and objectionable materials, especially pornography. In many countries, pictures of 'immodestly' dressed persons can attract severe penalties.

Masters must be fully aware of all items stored in the ship's bonded locker and make sure that none of the items placed under seal is tampered with. Any personal effects stored in the bonded locker must be fully identified for its contents and ownership. Masters must ensure that any banned items identified are destroyed before arrival. Other 'illegal' goods or possessions can include weapons, explosives, pets, drugs in any form other than for medical purposes.

**Editor's note:** A sensible practice being followed by some companies is to notify each joining seafarer of common controlled or banned substances and articles and to obtain a written individual undertaking that they shall not possess any of these during their employment. This will not only serve as a warning to seafarers but may also serve as evidence of due diligence.

## MARS 200874

### Anchoring safely

I am a pilot and I boarded a fully laden panamax bulk carrier by helicopter, as boat services were suspended due to a prevailing gale.

When we turned toward the port entrance I got a message that the berth would be occupied for another 10 – 14 hours. The captain and I discussed the situation. I proposed to keep the vessel underway. I thought it was not advisable to send crew to the fo'c'sle as there was a risk that green water would come over the bow. Furthermore, the anchorage has poor holding ground and ships have tended to drag anchors under these conditions.

However the captain wanted to anchor. He took the con and brought the vessel to the recommended anchorage. Although I was not formally involved, to avoid extra charges for the captain I stayed on the bridge unofficially, to assist in communications with port and other vessels.

Suddenly, I noticed that the captain had become very tense and was talking very agitatedly with the mate on the fo'c'sle in their common language. I asked what was happening and it appeared that there were nine shackles in the water, the chain running out quite quickly and leading ahead, despite the engine having been on dead slow ahead for a while. A quick check of the GPS gave an astern SOG (speed over ground) of around one knot, so the chain was running out at rate of one shackle per minute. With 11 shackles chain total, that gave us by then less than two minutes to stop the vessel. My very strong advice was to give a 'full ahead' order on the engine and we managed to stop the vessel with only half a shackle left till the bitter end.

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MARS is strictly confidential and can help so many – please contribute.

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