

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FISHING ACCIDENT REPORT

FAMILY TRAGEDY AVERTED



The families of three crew members were very nearly left grieving when a small fishing vessel (less than 10m registered length) took a glancing blow from a 248m tanker.

Fortunately, on this occasion, the outcome was relatively minor and the three men survived.

The trawler was returning to her home port, in fair weather and good visibility, but it was dark. Having ensured that no other vessels were in the immediate vicinity, the skipper went to the after deck to help the two deckhands process the catch. His view outside from the sheltered processing area was limited to directly astern. He returned to the wheelhouse every 12-15 minutes to check for traffic, but saw none.

The tanker, meanwhile, was heading nearly due south at about 13 knots. Her bridge team consisted of the chief officer and a lookout. The chief officer saw the lights of a vessel at between 30° and 40° on the port bow, and the radar indicated that she was at a distance of about 5.5 miles and on a collision course. As they approached, he could see through his binoculars that the other vessel was a fishing vessel on passage. Under collision regulations, his was the stand-on vessel, so he expected the trawler to alter course and give way – but it did not.

Aware that fishing vessels often delay taking avoiding action until relatively close, the chief officer initially just monitored the situation. However, when he became concerned that the fishing vessel was taking no avoiding action, the chief officer went to the bridge wing and flashed his Aldis lamp at her. He then sounded one long blast on the ship's whistle. Still the trawler took no action. As the distance between the two vessels closed, and when about 1.2 miles apart, he ordered his own vessel hard-to-starboard. But by this time it was too late.

The fishing vessel received a glancing blow to her starboard shoulder as the tanker turned rapidly. The impact caused her to heel over violently, and seas poured in over her port quarter. Although her three crew members were jolted suddenly, none were injured and the vessel suffered only relatively minor damage.



A view from bridge of the tanker

Similar Case

In 1998, a collision occurred in similar circumstances when the Scottish fishing vessel *Silvery Sea* ran bow into the side of a container ship which was also turning hard-to-starboard. Sadly, the five crew on board were not so lucky: they were trapped inside and everyone on board perished when the vessel sank.

Lessons

Restrictions in the number of fishing days and fishing quotas has caused fishing incomes to drop, which in turn has forced skippers/owners to cut down the number of deckhands employed. This problem has been compounded by the reluctance of young people to take up fishing as a career. Consequently, there can be conflicting priorities between processing a catch in time for landing and keeping a proper lookout.

**It is essential that those entrusted with lookout duties perform them properly.
Not doing so can have fatal consequences.**

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