

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE FISHING INDUSTRY

COLLISION BETWEEN THE BULK CARRIER *ALAM PINTAR* AND THE FISHING VESSEL *ETOILE DES ONDES*

20 DECEMBER 2009



Alam Pintar



Etoile des Ondes

On the evening of 20 December 2009 the Singapore registered bulk carrier *Alam Pintar* collided with the UK registered fishing vessel *Etoile des Ondes*, 15 nm north of the Cherbourg peninsula. As a result of the collision the fishing vessel sank with the loss of one of her four crew. *Alam Pintar* sustained only cosmetic damage.

Alam Pintar's bridge was manned by an inexperienced officer of the watch (OOW) and a cadet. The OOW had seen the fishing vessel, visually and by radar. He assessed there was a risk of collision and made two changes to his course. These changes were insubstantial and were rendered ineffective when *Etoile des Ondes* made a large change of course upon arriving at the skipper's preferred position for shooting his pots. The OOW also had difficulty identifying the fishing vessel's navigation lights due to glare from the deck working lights.

The skipper of *Etoile des Ondes* had not been monitoring *Alam Pintar's* actions but assumed that she would keep clear of his vessel. However, his change of course upon shooting pots was directly into the path of *Alam Pintar*, and the vessels were then so close that *Alam Pintar's* OOW had insufficient time to take any further, effective action.

Alam Pintar did not stop to offer assistance after the collision. Fortunately, the surviving crew from *Etoile des Ondes* managed to get into their liferaft and fire two red parachute distress rockets; they also released and activated their EPIRB¹. The surviving crew were later rescued by a ferry.

¹ EPIRB – Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon

SAFETY LESSONS

- The skipper of *Etoile des Ondes* was concentrating intently on shooting his pots; this distracted him from keeping an effective lookout. When fishing operations mean the skipper could become distracted, other crew members should help with lookout duties until the skipper can return his full attention to the keeping of a lookout.
- Fishermen seem to believe that when engaged in fishing they can make any manoeuvre and nearby merchant vessels will understand what is happening and be able to take action to keep clear. This is a very dangerous assumption to make as not all OOWs are equally conscientious or experienced. Furthermore, bigger vessels may not be able to react in time. You may be in the right, but don't end up right in it!
- It is obvious that the working deck needs to be well lit at night. However, working lights should be carefully positioned, or shielded, so that the navigation lights can be distinguished by other vessels.
- None of the crew of *Etoile des Ondes* wore any kind of flotation device. They knew where the lifejackets were located, but after the collision there was no time to reach them. This incident shows yet again the need for fishermen to wear some form of device when working on deck; had they done so, the missing crew member might also have survived.
- *Etoile des Ondes* was well equipped; the liferaft and EPIRB were not required on a vessel of this size, but proved vital in saving the crew. Owners and skippers are encouraged to equip their vessels with such equipment.

Since this collision the owners of *Etoile des Ondes* have fitted an AIS² unit to their remaining vessel to help the skipper identify other vessels in the vicinity, and allow unambiguous communications to be made.

This flyer and the MAIB's investigation report are posted on our website:
www.maib.gov.uk

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² AIS – Automatic Identification System