

► CASE STUDY

Caution is required in reduced visibility

Category: Navigation

Vessel type: Passenger vessel

Issue date: 16/03/2012

Case number: 26912

Incident

In this case a double decker passenger ferry was making its way in port at a speed of about 4 knots. Weather conditions were poor and visibility restricted by thick fog to less than 100 feet. In his statement the master commented that the aft wheel house could not be seen from the forward wheel house. The vessel's automatic fog signal was on, sounding every 90 seconds. The vessel's radar was originally set at 0.75 miles, and was subsequently increased to 1.5 miles.

At 09:03hrs the master observed a high speed catamaran on the radar, on a collision course off the starboard side. It was moving very fast and was at a distance of approximately 1.2 miles. On adjusting the radar back to 0.75 miles, it became apparent the catamaran was less than 0.75 miles away. The master immediately ordered the vessel full astern and blew three short blasts on the ships whistle, but there was little that could be done to avoid the collision which occurred less than a minute later. It was subsequently established that the catamaran was doing 31 knots despite the poor visibility.

Three passengers from the catamaran were airlifted from the scene, one with a severed foot, the other two with reported spinal injuries. In addition 24 passengers sustained minor injuries.

Observations

- The catamaran had cut across the bow of our Member's vessel at the time of impact at an angle of 75 degrees. The port side of the catamaran was torn over approximately 22 metres.
- The local marine department's report into the incident concluded that the catamaran was substantially to blame for the collision and the master was subsequently prosecuted and found guilty under Rule 4 of the International Regulations for Avoiding Collisions at Sea for failing to keep a proper lookout, under Rule 6, for failing to proceed at a safe speed.
- Our vessel received some criticism for not operating the radar at a range greater than 1.5 miles, which would have made them aware of the catamaran marginally earlier.

The training ideas listed below are recommended by the Club to raise awareness of the issues related to this case study and to potentially be used as part of the Member's own training programme.

Training ideas

As highlighted the cause of this case was poor navigational practices in restricted visibility. It is therefore suggested that:

- The Deck Officers including the Master to be trained and reminded regularly on Industry the best navigational practices and company standards/procedures to be adopted when navigating in or near an area of restricted visibility. Such training sessions to include, but not be limited to, safe speed, increased

look out and the optimum use of navigational equipment etc.

- The master to train the officers on the proper use of RADARS including effective use of rain and sea clutters, setting of RADARS to appropriate ranges to take into consideration the prevailing weather condition, traffic density and own vessel's speed.
- Shore-based navigational simulators could be engaged to train crew in dealing with various extreme circumstances, including weather conditions, which may be encountered at sea.
- Courses such as Bridge Team Management (BTM) and Bridge Resource Management (BRM) to be conducted for ship's crew whilst ashore, to ensure that they make best use of all available means at their disposal.