CASE STUDY

Grounding caused by sleeping watchkeeper

Category: Navigation
Vessel type: Dry cargo: container
Issue date: 01/06/2012
Case number: 10/2012

Please note that this case study has been extracted from UK MAIB’s Accident Investigation Report no. 10/2012

The incident
At 05.36 hrs on 3rd August 2011, the 7,852 GT container vessel ‘Karin Schepers’ grounded on the Cornish coast while on passage from Cork, Ireland to Rotterdam, Netherlands. At 03.23 hrs the master relieved the second officer as the officer of the watch and he fell asleep a short time later. No lookout was posted, and with no one awake on the bridge the vessel continued making way for over two hours, crossing the Land’s End Traffic Separation Scheme before grounding close to Pendeen Lighthouse, West Cornwall, UK. The vessel was undamaged, and the crew were able to refloat her on the rising tide.

Investigation revealed that that the master had probably been drinking alcohol, which could have contributed to his fatigue. In addition, no lookout was posted on the navigational bridge during the incident contrary to the company’s Safety Management System (SMS) procedures, and the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System (BNWAS) was not activated during the incident.

Conclusions
• Lookout should be posted on the navigational bridge when the vessel enters and departs port, and during the hours of darkness.
• BNWAS should be used whenever the vessel is underway, and at anchor, if appropriate.
• The drug and alcohol policy should be strictly complied with on board.