

MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 3/2010

Vehicle deck fire on board the ro-ro passenger
ferry *Commodore Clipper*



Bahamas Maritime Authority
20 Old Broad Street
London
EC2N 1AR

MAIB

Marine Accident Investigation Branch
Mountbatten House
Grosvenor Square
Southampton
SO15 2JU



MAIB SAFETY BULLETIN 3/2010

This document, containing safety lessons, has been produced for marine safety purposes only, on the basis of information available to date.

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2005 provide for the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents to make recommendations at any time during the course of an investigation if, in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable to do so.

Stephen Meyer
Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents

NOTE

This bulletin is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 13(9) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2005, shall not be admissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes, is to apportion liability or blame.

As the flag state, the Bahamas Maritime Authority has agreed the content of this Bulletin.

This bulletin is also available on our website: www.maib.gov.uk
Press Enquiries: 020 7944 6433/3387; Out of hours: 020 7944 4292
Public Enquiries: 0300 330 3000

BACKGROUND

At 0242 (BST) on 16 June 2010, while the ro-ro ferry *Commodore Clipper* was on passage from Jersey to Portsmouth, a fire was detected on the main vehicle deck. The vehicle deck was loaded with unaccompanied freight trailers and crew identified that a refrigerated trailer unit, powered from the ship's electrical supply, had caught fire.

The vehicle deck was fully enclosed and smoke built up quickly. The crew contained the fire using the vehicle deck water drenching system and boundary cooling from above, but were not able to extinguish it.

The vessel came into port and the crew assisted the local fire and rescue service in attempts to fight the fire. Freight trailers were packed closely on the vehicle deck and firefighters found it extremely difficult to reach the seat of the fire. Trailers had to be towed off before the fire, which had by now burned for about 18 hours and spread to four trailers, was finally put out.



Firefighters preparing to attack the fire from the stern door

ANALYSIS

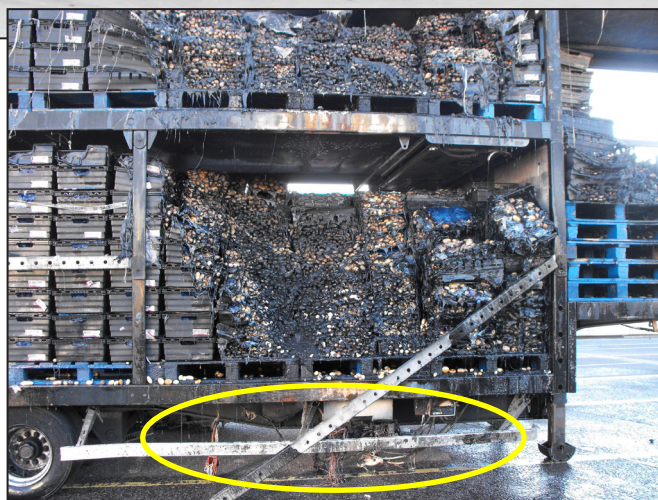
Preliminary findings of the subsequent accident investigation indicate that the fire was caused by an electrical fault involving the power supply from the ship and the trailer's refrigeration control system. The resultant sustained overheating led to the curtain-side of the trailer igniting. Although the ship's electrical breakers were found to be working correctly, they did not trip before the fire started.

MAIB has also received other reports of power supply cables to refrigerated trailers becoming very hot while in use.

Damage to one of the refrigerated trailers and its cargo of potatoes



Electrical power connection



Damaged refrigeration control units

RECOMMENDATION

S2010/118M Operators of vessels carrying refrigerated trailer units should:

- Take immediate action to ensure that all power supply cables and fittings provided for refrigerated trailer units are in good condition and that electrical protection devices will activate at an appropriate level.
- Until such time as the exact causes of this fire have been established, make additional checks of refrigerated trailers powered by ships' electrical systems to provide early warning of any overheating.

Issued July 2010