

SYNOPSIS



A large vessel, dragging her anchor in heavy weather, dislodged a strategic pipeline carrying gas into the United Kingdom. Although, in this case, the risk of pollution was avoided, the pipeline was out of action for over 2 months.

At 2200 on 25 June 2007, the tanker *Young Lady* started to drag her anchor in Tees Bay; the wind speed was in excess of 40 kts and there was a heavy northerly swell. The master decided to weigh anchor and depart, but during the operation the windlass hydraulic motor exploded and the cable ran out to the bitter end. The vessel continued to drag her anchor until 2300 when, passing over the CATS gas pipeline, the anchor flukes snagged the pipe.

The vessel was caught on the pipeline for about 10 minutes before a wide yaw caused the flukes to free themselves. *Young Lady* continued dragging until the anchor finally held as it rode over a shoal patch, 2.5 miles off a lee shore. There were no injuries sustained or damage caused by pollution.

A subsequent survey of the pipeline showed that *Young Lady*'s anchor had lifted the pipeline out of its trench and dragged it about 6m laterally. The pipeline suffered damage to the concrete coating and impact damage to the steel surface.

The MAIB investigation found that:

- The master was aware that the anchorage was not recommended in the forecast conditions, and the decision to remain at anchor was inappropriate.
- There was no statutory requirement for anyone to monitor the area adjacent to the CATS pipeline, or to identify vessels anchoring too close.
- A number of strategic oil and gas pipelines run close to large vessel anchorages. A breach of these pipelines could have significant implications for the United Kingdom's energy supply.
- The risks associated with large vessels anchoring or dragging over pipelines had not been fully assessed. Consequently, some strategic pipelines could be vulnerable to snagging by large anchors.

Recommendations have been issued to:

- The manager of *Young Lady*, designed to improve the information available to its masters when anchoring large vessels.
- The MCA, BPA and UKMPG, to review the criteria and procedures used by port administrations to ensure HM Coastguard receives early notification of developing situations.
- The DfT, DBERR and HSE to conduct a review of the risk assessment process for the protection of pipelines from surface vessel interaction.