Memorandum issued by ABP Humber Estuary Services

ABP

HUMBER ESTUARY SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

OUR REFERENCE	YOUR REFERENCE	DATE
M.09L-06 PIL.198-02-06		16 August 2006

All Humber Pilots
c/o The Pilot Lobby
Port House
Hull

Gentlemen

COLLISION BETWEEN THE MV "SKAGERN" AND MV "SAMSKIP COURIER" – 7 JUNE 2006

As most of you are probably aware we have recently suffered a major collision in the River Humber between two piloted vessels in poor visibility. This incident is being fully investigated by the MAIB, who will be producing a full report. I do not intend to go into too much detail about the incident here due to that full investigation taking place, however, I feel it is pertinent that you should be advised of the following:

- Both vessels were fitted with modern radars and were very well equipped for conducting pilotage passages in poor visibility. The "Samskip Courier" is a very modern ship; only a few weeks old; and, although the "Skagern" is 22 years old, she is well equipped. Therefore, poor or inadequate equipment cannot be blamed.

- Fog signals were not being sounded on either vessel which is in contravention of the International Collision Regulations. Notice to Mariners No. H.42-2006 makes particular reference to the use of sound signals on the Humber.

  It has come to my attention that a number of pilots believe we are only paying lip service to the sound signal requirements. Please be assured that this is not the case. Any pilot who fails to observe the sound signalling requirement on this river will most certainly face disciplinary action. It is my intention that we will be carrying out spot checks on the use of whistle signals in the near future to enforce this policy.

- The role of the bridge team, their level of co-operation and, indeed, experience should be one of the factors taken into account when determining the safe speed, especially in restricted visibility. A vessel with a fully switched-on and swept-up bridge team used to working with and including the pilot in that framework should allow for a faster "safe speed" than on a vessel with a poor bridge team, where information flow is slow and assistance rendered to the pilot limited. The International Collision Regulations apply fully on the Humber and particular attention should be paid to rules 6 and 19 as a major factor in determining "safe speed". Whilst the master remains in command of his vessel the pilot has the local knowledge and wherewithal to give good advice to the master based on location in the river, proximity of hazards and the peculiarities of the currents and depths in that area. The actual ship speed can be varied during the passage but should always remain safe.

Once you find yourself concerned about another vessel's intentions or, indeed, your own position, then the speed should be reduced to keep it "safe" and, if necessary, all way should be taken off and the vessel be stopped using astern propulsion, if required. If a collision is to happen, the slower the speed the better. The combined speed of the "Skagern" and "Samskip Courier" was approximately 23 knots.

If a pilot finds himself disorientated in the river, then reduce speed immediately and seek help from VTS. If a close quarters situation is quickly developing with another vessel, where emergency action is required, altering course out of the channel is a consideration and is preferable than to collide with another ship. Whilst no-one wishes to collide with a navigational mark, again, it is preferable to do so than to hit another vessel. Most of the navigational buoys in our estuary can be slipped and, again, this action should be part of any passage planning to deal with unforeseen circumstances. The bottom of the Humber is, in the main, sand or mud and in the lower reaches, to my knowledge, we have no large rocks or boulders which could tear the bottom out of a ship and for that we have to be thankful.

- The importance of the bridge team in plotting other ships, the use of parallel index techniques and keeping a good visual and radar lookout cannot be over-emphasised. The pilot can advise the lookout of approaching navigational marks and/or vessels and their position can be confirmed and visibly checked.

We cannot afford complacency. As pilots on the Humber we offer a professional service and must be prepared to take positive and immediate action in the event of another vessel not doing what is expected.

Fortunately, circumstances like the one we have just experienced are very rare and it has to be pointed out that the ship's master and his crew are required to play a great role in the pilotage of their vessel and ultimately it remains the master's responsibility for what happens. However, should a pilot find himself with little or no co-operation from the bridge team, then the safe speed would indeed be very much slower than on a vessel where full co-operation was being experienced. Should any pilot find himself on a vessel where co-operation with the bridge team is so poor that he is uncomfortable about proceeding in the prevailing circumstances and conditions, then he should report to VTS and the passage should be either not started or, if underway, the vessel will be directed to an anchorage.

Once the MAIB have completed their inquiries and the report of the incident published we will review our training needs.

Regards

PILOTAGE OPERATIONS MANAGER

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- via email
MAIB

COPY

Extract from SOLAS Requirements for Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs)

ANNEX 10

Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs)

1. **Carriage requirements**
2. **Download and Playback equipment**
3. **Exemptions**
4. **System Installation Test**
5. **Annual Performance Check and Certification.**
6. **IMO Guidelines on Voyage Data Recorders (VDR) Ownership and Recovery**

APPENDIX – Data to be recorded

1. Carriage requirements:

SOLAS REQUIREMENTS

Regulation 20: carriage of Voyage Data Recorders (VDR or S-VDR) – Timetable for fitting

Para.	Type of vessel	Date by which VDR or S-VDR must be fitted
20.1.1	Passenger ships constructed on or after 1 July 2002	VDR – Date of build
20.1.2	Ro-ro passenger ships constructed before 1 July 2002	VDR – Date of first survey on or after 1 July 2002
20.1.3	Passenger ships other than ro-ro constructed before 1 July 2002	VDR – 1 January 2004
20.1.4	Ships other than passenger ships of 3000 gt. and upwards constructed on or after 1 July 2002	VDR – Date of build
20.2.1	Cargo ships of 20000 gt. and upwards constructed before 1 July 2002*	VDR or S-VDR** – Date of first scheduled dry docking after 1 July 2006 but not later than 1 July 2008
20.2.2	Cargo ships of 3000 gt. up to 20000 gt. constructed before 1 July 2002	* VDR or S-VDR** – Date of first scheduled dry docking after 1 July 2007 but not later than 1 July 2010
20.2.3	*Cargo ships built before 1 July 2002 may be exempted from requirements to carry VDR /S-VDR when they are to be taken permanently out of service within 2 years of the relevant implementation date.	

** See APPENDIX to this Annex for a table of data items to be recorded by VDRs and S-VDRs.

For EU Requirements for ships on domestic voyages see paragraph 1.4.

1.1 Regulation 20 requires VDRs to be fitted to ships built on or after 1 July 2002 according to the timetable above.

1.2 Regulation 20.2 requires cargo ships built before 1 July 2002 to be fitted with VDRs, or Simplified VDRs (S-VDR) as an alternative.

1.3 Regulation 20.3 recognises that older ships may have difficulties in interfacing equipment with VDRs and allows Administrations to make exemptions. (See Section 3 of this Annex)

EU requirements

1.4 EU Council Directive 2002/59/EC (Vessel Traffic Monitoring Directive) requires all ships calling at a port of a Member State to be fitted with a VDR. This includes ships on UK domestic voyages. Ships operating only in coastal waters that are classified for domestic passenger ships as EC Classes B, C or D (see Table 3 in Annex 1) may be exempted."

2. Download and Playback equipment

An amendment to the performance standards for VDRs and S-VDRs was adopted on 12 May 2006 (IMO Resolution MSC.214(81)). This requires the equipment to be fitted with an interface compatible with an internationally recognised format, so that stored data can be downloaded and played back by investigationg authorities on a portable computer.

These additional requirements for interfacing to allow download and playback apply to all VDR and S-VDR equipment fitted on or after 1 June 2008

3. Exemptions

3.1 Exemptions to Carriage Requirements (existing vessels).

3.1.1 Regulation 20.3 of SOLAS Chapter V states that: *Administrations may exempt ships, other than ro-ro passenger ships, constructed before 1 July 2002 from being fitted with a VDR where it can be demonstrated that interfacing a VDR with the existing equipment on the ship is unreasonable and impracticable. However cargo ships built before 1 July 2002 must fit VDRs or S-VDRs according to the timetable in section 1 above.*

3.1.2 EU Council Directive 1999/35/EC states that: *For VDR's to be placed on board ro-ro ferries and high-speed passenger craft built before entry into force of the directive, exemptions for compliance with some of the requirements may be granted.*

3.1.3 EU Council Directive 2002/59/EC requires that *all ships calling at a port of a Member State are fitted with a Voyage Data Recorder (VDR)….. meeting the performance standards of IMO Resolution A.861(20). And that any exemptions granted to ro-ro ferries or high speed passenger craft under Article 4(1)(d) of Council Directive 1999/35/EC of 29 April 1999 on a system of mandatory surveys for the safe operation of regular ro-ro ferry and high-speed passenger craft services shall terminate on 5 August 2002.* This Directive came into force in February 2004.

3.1.4 Under current proposals, there will be no exemption for early scrapping of ro-ro and passenger vessels.

3.2 Exemptions to requirement to interface to certain items of equipment.