

SYNOPSIS



On 25 February 2004, just before 0600 UTC, the cargo vessels *Hoo Finch* and *Front Viewer* were involved in a near collision just north of the Humber deep water anchorage. *Hoo Finch*, a general cargo vessel of 794gt, was en route between Teesport and Teignmouth, and following a planned track, which took her through the deep water anchorage and close to the pilot boarding area off the River Humber. *Front Viewer*, a bulk carrier of 89,004gt, had recently weighed anchor and, with one pilot on board, was manoeuvring to pick up a second pilot before entering the river bound for Immingham. *Hoo Finch*, as the give way vessel, failed to take early and substantial action to avoid the close quarters situation. The collision was narrowly avoided by last minute action taken by both vessels.

In accordance with her minimum safe manning certificate, *Hoo Finch* carried a total of two watchkeeping officers, the master and the mate, as well as three ratings. The mate was alone on the bridge during the 0000 to 0600 watch contrary to the requirements of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO's) Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). As the situation developed, he was unable to properly interpret what he could see and, consequently, he failed to take prompt and decisive avoiding action. The mate admitted to being tired. His recorded hours of work and rest during the days preceding the incident have been analysed and it is concluded that his performance was degraded due to an accumulated sleep debt and disruption to his circadian rhythm. He was not asleep, but suffering the effects of fatigue brought on by long duty hours and disrupted sleep patterns. The work on board had not been shared equitably among the crew.

At about 0545, the mate left the bridge to call the relief master. The bridge was left unmanned at this time. VHF radio calls were made from *Front Viewer* and Humber Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), which should have alerted *Hoo Finch* to the impending danger, but the mate heard none of these calls. Calls, apparently made by the mate using channel 16 VHF, were not heard on *Front Viewer* or by Humber VTS. *Front Viewer* and a pilot vessel flashed lights towards *Hoo Finch's* bridge windows, but these were not seen by the mate.

Recommendations have been addressed to the UK and International Chambers of Shipping and the International Shipping Federation, on passage planning, fatigue, manning, and lookouts. Also, a recommendation has been addressed to the owners, regarding the proper functioning of the VHF radios on their vessels.