

SYNOPSIS



On 1 November 2003, just after 1800 UTC, *Donald Redford*, an aggregates dredger which was en route to her dredging grounds, collided with Hythe Pier, Southampton Water. No one was injured in the accident, but the pier was substantially damaged and put out of use. An MAIB investigation began that evening.

Donald Redford's crew was divided into two teams of three. The senior master commanded one team and the junior master commanded the other. The teams worked 6 hours on and 6 hours off, with the command of the vessel being passed between the masters on handover. The junior master was in command at the time of the accident, and was alone on the bridge, despite it being dark, and being in confined and busy waters.

Before the accident, *Donald Redford* had discharged a cargo of aggregate at Woolston. She departed at about 1750, and headed downriver towards her dredging grounds to the east of the Isle of Wight. After passing under the Itchen Bridge, her track became erratic. Instead of altering course into the small craft channel in Southampton Water as planned, she crossed the main channel, narrowly missed the corner of Hythe Marina and then collided with the pier.

Tests after the accident showed that the junior master had consumed a substantial amount of alcohol. His judgment had also probably been affected by fatigue, and possibly by the effects of a prescribed drug. Neither the owners, nor the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), were aware that he was taking a prescribed drug. The accident highlighted a culture of tolerance to alcohol abuse in areas of the short sea trade.

Southampton VTS operators noted the junior master's slurred speech, but did not closely monitor the vessel's progress. VTS alerted the vessel on VHF radio when she was crossing the main channel but, in the event, the warning was too late to prevent the collision. Associated British Ports (ABP) has taken action to improve the VTS response.

Recommendations have been addressed to the UK Chamber of Shipping regarding the issue of guidance to its members on alcohol misuse, hours of work, and seafarers who are taking prescribed medication.

Recommendations have also been addressed to the British Ports Association, and the UK Major Ports Group on alcohol-related issues and the forthcoming Transport Act, hours of work and bridge manning.