

SYNOPSIS



At 0936 (UTC+1) on 8 May 2002, the stern freezer trawler *Marbella* collided with the BD platform of the *Bravo* installation in the Rough Gas Field, off the coast of East Yorkshire. The fishing vessel suffered severe damage to the starboard bow, but there was relatively minor damage to the platform's jacket. There were no injuries and no pollution. Humber Coastguard informed the MAIB of the accident at 1141 that day.

Marbella left Alexandra Dock in Hull at 0425 on 8 May and carried out compass adjustments in the River Humber. Once the adjustments had been finished and the compass adjusters had been disembarked, she continued downriver to the sea to begin her passage to the fishing grounds in the Arctic Circle near Spitsbergen. The pilot disembarked at 0800 and the skipper and mate took the vessel through the traffic separation scheme. At 0845, just after the vessel had passed the N New Sands buoy, the skipper and mate went below, after handing over the watch to the second mate. The course had been set at 015° and the speed was about 13 knots. The visibility was between 1 and 2 miles. A lookout was on the bridge. The second mate saw the radar echo of what he interpreted to be the Rough Gas Field within the 12-mile range and on his starboard bow.

After a period of time, a routine engine room alarm sounded, and the second mate then walked around the bridge to make checks on the different systems. When he returned to the radar, he could not identify the echo of the Rough Gas Field. The visibility had reduced to about half a cable. The lookout shouted to the effect that the platform was ahead and the second mate quickly turned the automatic helm to port, but a collision with the platform ensued.

The master of the stand-by vessel, *Putford Achilles*, had plotted the approaching fishing vessel, and had tried to make contact with her by VHF radio before the accident, without success. A fault was later found with the VHF radio equipment. Non-essential crew were evacuated from the installation by helicopter to a nearby tanker, which had a helicopter deck, and to Humberside airport. An RNLI lifeboat and a tug escorted the vessel back to Hull, without further incident.

A number of causal factors led to this collision, including the lack of a satisfactory voyage plan and proper position plotting in relation to the installation, and an unexplained alteration of course to starboard some 6 minutes before the collision.

The MCA initiated discussions with the offshore and fishing industries with the aim of reducing the number of future similar incidents and near misses, and has produced a Safety Alert.

Chief Inspector's letters have been sent to Boston Putford Safety Ltd and Marr Fishing Vessel Management Limited, with respect to reinforcing existing company operating instructions and procedures relating respectively to potential infringements of the safety zone of offshore installations and effective passage planning and monitoring.