

SYNOPSIS



At 0153 UTC on 7 June 2001, the Panamanian-registered refrigerated cargo vessel *Atlantic Mermaid*, collided with the Cypriot-registered general cargo vessel *Hampoel*, off the Varne in the south-west bound lane of the Dover Strait traffic separation scheme (TSS) (**Figure 1**). An MAIB investigation began that day.

Atlantic Mermaid was on passage from Sheerness to Argentina in ballast. *Hampoel* was loaded with a cargo of peat, bound from Estonia to Italy.

Atlantic Mermaid was the faster of the two vessels and was approaching *Hampoel* from astern. She had altered course to starboard for a ferry off Dover and, once the ferry had passed safely, set a course to bring the vessel further inside the traffic lane.

About 17 minutes before the collision, when the distance between the vessels was about 2.4 miles, the officer on watch on *Hampoel* noticed the approaching vessel astern of his own vessel. At 0149, he made a brief VHF call to the other vessel which went unanswered.

It became apparent that the overtaking vessel was taking no action and that a collision was imminent. The officer on watch on *Hampoel* pushed the main engine overspeed and sounded the general alarm and ship's whistle. As he did so the two vessels collided.

Hampoel suffered damage to her starboard quarter. One seaman suffered slight injuries. *Atlantic Mermaid* sustained damage to her bow.

The cause of the collision was that *Atlantic Mermaid* failed to observe the presence of *Hampoel* which failed to take avoiding action.

A further 13 contributory causes have been identified.

Recommendations have been made which, if implemented, will reduce the risk of a similar accident happening in the future.