

SYNOPSIS

While on passage down the River Thames, from Fulham to Gravesend, the tank barge *Bruce Stone* collided with the ro-ro cargo vessel *Loverval*, at Purfleet Deep Water Berth where *Loverval* was secure alongside and in the process of discharging cargo. *Bruce Stone* was in ballast; her normal cargo was gas oil.

The accident was reported to the MAIB (Marine Accident Investigation Branch) on 21 December 2000 and an investigation began that day.

There were no injuries or pollution. *Loverval* was holed above the waterline on her port side; *Bruce Stone* sustained only superficial bow damage. However, the potential for a more serious accident was there; especially if *Bruce Stone* had been carrying cargo.

The cause of the accident was *Bruce Stone* deviating from her intended track because her mate had fallen asleep while on watch.

Contributory causes were:

- the mate suffering from the effects of fatigue caused by long hours of duty;
- lack of quality rest and the alcohol he had recently consumed;
- no additional person on watch during the hours of darkness;
- the absence of a fully operational watch alarm.

Recommendations are addressed to the owner and manager of the vessel, Thames Shipping, to:

- Introduce specific guidelines in its *Quality, Safety and Environmental Manual* with respect to hours of work and rest periods, with the aim of eliminating fatigue among watchkeepers.
- Consider the employment of an additional person to act as lookout/watchkeeper on those vessels operating continually for long periods, especially during the hours of darkness.
- Consider fitting watch alarms on all of its vessels.

Recommendations have also been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to:

- Consider issuing a Marine Guidance Note, directed specifically at domestic vessel owners and operators, which encompasses the relevant advice contained in *MGN 84 (F)*, *MGN 137(M&F)* and *MSN 1682(M)*.
- Consider extending the proposed derivative of the *ISM Code* to domestic tankers.