

SYNOPSIS

At about 2153 (UTC) on 12 January 2000, the Cayman Islands registered reefer *Pasadena Universal* collided with the Cyprus registered bulk carrier *Nordheim*. Dover Coastguard informed the MAIB of the accident at 2302 that day. Captain N Beer and Captain P Kavanagh carried out the investigation.

Pasadena Universal was on passage in ballast from Antwerp, Belgium to the Panama Canal. The master, the third officer and a helmsman were on the bridge; the master had been there since leaving port at 1200. As the ship approached F3 lightfloat from the east, the master decided to alter course earlier than the passage plan dictated because of a possible close quarters with a number of ships on various courses in the south-west bound traffic separation lane. The F3 lightfloat is about 22 miles east of North Foreland in Kent, England, and marks the separation between the south-west and north-east traffic lanes in the southern North Sea. The master passed south of F3 lightfloat, and then made directly for the next waypoint, making good a course of 225° true and a speed of 20 knots.

Nordheim was on passage from Hamburg, Germany to Saint-Malo, France. The chief officer was on watch with a lookout stationed on the port bridge wing. The courses steered were 210° and 215° to make 204° true, and she was making a speed of about 12.3 knots. The chief officer saw a ship nearly right astern overtaking his ship and opening to starboard. As he approached the next waypoint with what he assumed to be the overtaking ship about one mile astern, he began to alter course to starboard using the automatic helm, 5° at a time on to a new course of 230° true.

Pasadena Universal had *Nordheim* about 30° on her starboard bow, but the master altered course to allow *Nordheim* to pass ahead, after which the two ships were on diverging courses. He then decided to alter course to port to pass between *Nordheim* and a fishing vessel, which was now on *Pasadena Universal*'s port bow but to starboard of *Nordheim*. The third officer on *Pasadena Universal* suddenly saw that *Nordheim* had become very close, and despite taking avoiding action the two ships collided.

While *Nordheim*'s chief officer was altering course, *Pasadena Universal* came in to view and he tried in vain to alter course to port away from her. He had been unaware of the approaching *Pasadena Universal*, and thought she was the overtaking ship he had seen earlier, which in fact was 6 miles away at the time of the collision.

If *Pasadena Universal*'s master had been fully aware of the sea room to the west, he might have taken the safer action of leaving the fishing vessel and *Nordheim* well to port. Contrary to Rule 2(a) of the *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea*, he failed to anticipate *Nordheim*'s possible navigational alteration of course, and erroneously assumed that she would remain on her course during the time *Pasadena Universal* would pass between the two vessels.

If *Nordheim*'s chief officer had been aware of *Pasadena Universal*, and had appreciated her rapid speed of approach, he might have given himself the option of delaying the navigational alteration of course. In this regard, he failed to maintain a proper lookout in accordance with Rule 5 of the *Collision Regulations*.

The MAIB has no safety recommendations to make at this time.