

SYNOPSIS

At 1932 (UTC) on 18 November 1999, while the 56,115gt tanker *Alfa Britannia* was berthing at the North Stage of Tranmere oil terminal in the River Mersey, a mooring line parted, whiplashed and struck the gig-boat *Osprey*, causing various injuries to all of her four crew members. Liverpool Coastguard informed the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) of the accident at 2048 that day.

The tanker was delivering a cargo of crude oil to the terminal and was berthing at the stage, which had a number of dolphins. The first line forward was a breast line, which was taken to dolphin No8 by *Osprey* and her crew. The wire line had an 11 m long nylon tail, the eye of which was placed over a bollard on the dolphin. The mooring line was heaved in by the ship's crew and made fast. When the gig-boat was taking the second mooring line, by the ship's side, the first mooring parted. The whiplash caused the line to hit the gig-boat, resulting in injuries to the crew and one in particular, who suffered multiple injuries. Another crew member was thrown into the river but was rescued by *Osprey* in difficult circumstances.

Two different test-houses examined the nylon tail, and found that dynamic loading had caused it to part. The load imposed on the tail originated from the movement of the ship as she finally came alongside.

The pilot's intended instruction to the master had been for him not to make the breast lines fast before the ship was in her final position alongside. However, there is conflicting evidence between what the pilot thought he had instructed and what the master thought the pilot had instructed. The master thought the pilot had instructed him to keep the first breast line tight, and he ordered the chief officer, who was in charge of the forward mooring party, to do so. Because all verbal communications were in Korean, the pilot did not know whether his intended instruction had been passed properly, or at all, to the chief officer.

The accident was caused by a breakdown in communications between the pilot and the ship's officers in that his intended instruction not to make the breast line fast was not carried out.

Recommendations are made to Shell UK Oil Products Limited on producing mooring guidelines, specific to the operational requirements and conditions for Tranmere oil terminal, and specific mooring plans for each ship.