

High potential: navigation near offshore wind turbines

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During survey operations, a chartered vessel entered a wind turbine safety zone on two separate occasions whilst attempting to achieve the closest approach line.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls

What happened?

During survey operations, a chartered vessel entered a wind turbine safety zone on two separate occasions whilst attempting to achieve the closest approach line. On the first occasion, the breach was dealt with onboard the vessel with a safety stand down. On the second occasion, the vessel was immediately stood down and instructed to leave the work site until safe control measures (actions) had been established and agreed with the client.

What went wrong?

The incident investigation established that the Officer on Watch (OOW) lost situational awareness and turned the wrong way – to port instead of to starboard. Given that the tide was running north to south, the OOW should have changed course to starboard for safe clearance of the wind turbine. Misjudgement resulted in a miscalculation of the vessel track, significantly contributing to the near miss incident. Agreed onboard procedures and standing orders were not followed.

What was the cause?

- Officers while experienced, were new to this vessel. Consequently, the bridge team had not been working together long:
 - Whilst the OOW was an experienced seafarer / officer, he was new to the vessel. He was not fully familiar with the manoeuvring characteristics of this vessel at slow speed whilst towing equipment.
 - The Captain was also new to the vessel.
- The OOW overlooked the need to notify the Captain when control of the vessel was lost.
- The risks associated with close quarter navigation / working in close proximity to an offshore structure was not fully appreciated by the bridge team – who are responsible for the safe navigation of the vessel.
- The bridge toolbox talk was not properly implemented at shift change.

Actions / Recommendations

- Further requirement for enhanced bridge watchkeeping standards and voyage / survey route planning during close quarter navigation.
- Shift change toolbox talk and handover was realigned to include more detail and time to focus on confidence, awareness, communication and contingency scenarios.
- Closer assessment and vetting was required for crew competency, experience and suitability by our member and their vessel charter company during the vessel vetting procedure. This was to be checked and rechecked before starting a project.

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