

Collision whilst drifting

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A member has reported an incident in which their vessel collided with a fishing vessel.

What happened?

The vessel was waiting for pilots to arrive to take her into port, and was drifting in an area around 12 nautical miles away from the port. Her main engine was on standby for immediate use. Navigational watch was maintained with duty officer (second officer) and an additional lookout on the bridge. Weather conditions were reported as good. Duty lookout reported three times to the duty officer that a fishing vessel was coming closer to vessel. Each time the duty officer acknowledged the duty lookout. Nevertheless, the fishing vessel and our member's vessel collided. Around 18m of scratch damage was observed on the starboard side aft – no dents were found. There were no injuries to either crew.

Our member's findings were as follows:

- Their own vessel failed to act in accordance with COLREGS 1972, and Master's standing orders. The duty officer failed to take action when duty lookout sounded of the approaching fishing vessel.
- There was a failure to use main engine to avoid contact with the closing fishing vessel.
- The duty officer was engaged in handing over watch to his reliever.
- Work and rest hours were in compliance with company requirements.

Our member noted that as well as minor damage to the vessel there was significant reputational damage to the company.

The following causes were identified:

- The vessel was not acting in accordance with COLREGS.
- Poor seamanship.
- The duty officer acknowledged lookout's repeated warning of the closing in fishing vessel but no action was taken.
- Management Factors -Inadequate planning/communication.
- ineffective risk assessment of the drift position.
- Master's Standing Orders not followed.
- Master was not informed of the closing in fishing vessel.

Preventative measures:

- COLREGS should be followed.
- Drifting should be considered in the same way as being under way.
- Handing over watch should be deferred if safety of navigation is affected.
- Duty officer should not be engaged in any other work which could interfere with safe navigation.
- Approaching vessels should be monitored by all available means to ensure they pass at a safe distance.

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