

American P&I Club: Vessel grounding – fatigue was a factor

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The American P&I Club, as part of its “Good Catch” safety series, has published a bulletin relating to a towing vessel grounding in which fatigue was a factor.

A towing vessel was on a coastal voyage pulling a large deck barge. The vessel had departed port earlier that morning after a very busy night loading and securing cargo on the barge. Cargo loading was not completed until 2:00 am and all of the cargo was confirmed to be properly secured by 6:30 am. The towing vessel got underway shortly thereafter.



What happened (Cont.)

The Mate took a nap before his watch at noon but still felt tired. He got off watch at 4:00 pm, slept, woke up at 11:00 pm, and relieved the Master on watch shortly before 11:45 pm.

The seas were exceptionally calm and there was no other traffic in the area. The towing vessel was on a course consistent with the voyage plan and the Mate was monitoring progress on the vessel's ECDIS. He noted that a course change was planned for 1:15 am to avoid a shoal area.

At approximately 1:25 am, the towing vessel ran aground on the shoal. The grounding caused both main engines to shut down. The engineers were unable to restart either main engine and suspected damage to both propellers and shafts. Both ducted propellers were heavily damaged. The towing vessel was out of operation for 10 weeks. Repairs cost over \$950,000. The vessel itself could easily

have been lost had the hull been breached, or had one of the propeller shafts been seriously compromised.

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What went wrong?

- The Mate fell asleep in his chair on watch. He indicated that a combination of the previous sleep disruption, extra work the night prior, and very calm seas caused his fatigue.
- A review of the work/rest log on the vessel indicated that the true hours of work were not being recorded daily. They appeared to be recorded once weekly for the entire week. A quick review indicated that the hours did not vary from day-to-day despite a varied work schedule for the crew.
- The Mate indicated that he had:
 - worked 13.5 hours in the 24-hour period prior to assuming the watch on which he fell asleep.
 - worked just over 29 hours in the 48-hour period prior to assuming that watch.
- The Mate also indicated that he did not set an alarm in the ECDIS to remind him of the planned course change nor did he set up depth contour alarms. He said he was familiar with how to do both, but it had not been their standard practice onboard this vessel.

Lessons learned

- Except in emergencies, the requirements for adequate rest should never be ignored for the sake of operations.
- Records of hours worked should be honestly filled out and maintained. Recordkeeping associated with work and rest should be made part of the culture onboard each vessel and part of the vessel's safety program.
- Mariners on watch who are having difficulty staying awake should recognize that the safety of the crew, the vessel and the cargo is at risk. They should either take direct action to maintain their alertness (stand up, move around, call a deckhand to come to the bridge, have a cup of coffee) or call the Master and ask for assistance.
- ECDIS alarms are valuable tools that should be fully used and correctly

set.

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