

Log M-84

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 15, 1979

Forwarded to:

Admiral John B. Hayes  
Commandant  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-79-59 through -66

On February 9, 1978, the inbound tanker ANCO SCEPTRE passed the outbound tanker POST CHARGER near Crown Point bend in the Houston Ship Channel. Immediately after the vessels passed, the ANCO SCEPTRE veered across the channel and struck a loading facility at the Crown Central Petroleum Corporation terminal pier, causing the facility to collapse. The damage to the loading facility was over \$1 million and the damage to the ANCO SCEPTRE was about \$500, <sup>1/</sup>

The pilots of the two vessels had agreed that their vessels would pass each other below Crown Point bend. However, the vessel passing occurred closer to the bend than the pilots planned. Consequently, the ANCO SCEPTRE was required to negotiate a right turn from a position close to the right bank of Crown Point immediately after passing the POST CHARGER. The ANCO SCEPTRE's maneuvering was then affected by bank effects and crosscurrents at the channel bend in the wake of the POST CHARGER, which caused the ANCO SCEPTRE to sheer across the channel. Despite the application of full right rudder and a full-eastern maneuvering order, the ANCO SCEPTRE's pilot was unable to stop the vessel's movement across the channel before striking the Crown pier. The pilot's maneuvering actions were constrained by the presence of two barges and a tug berthed at the pier. Vessel speed, unexpected currents, and channel silting also may have affected the ANCO SCEPTRE's maneuvering.

Although the ANCO SCEPTRE's pilot was voluntarily using the Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), there is no evidence that he requested the VTS to track and evaluate the movement of the two vessels to determine whether the passing would occur as planned; and similarly, there is no evidence that the VTS tracked the vessels or made any effort to advise the ANCO SCEPTRE's pilot concerning the undesirable passing situation which developed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) published information in 1965 about restricted channels

<sup>1/</sup> For more detailed information read "Marine Accident Report — M/V ANCO SCEPTRE Collision with the Crown Central Petroleum Corporation Pier, Houston Ship Channel, Houston, Texas, February 9, 1978" (NTSB-MAR-79-8).

and vessel navigation, which included precautions concerning two-way vessel passing and vessel maneuvering. Had the COE criteria been observed, the two-way vessel passing should not have been attempted. Apparently, the pilot and the VTS were unaware of the Corps' published information.

The Coast Guard's significant number of reported casualties at the Crown terminal indicates that vessels operating at Crown Point bend need to exercise greater caution. Unexpected currents and channel silting may be affecting deep-draft vessel maneuvering in the Houston Ship Channel. In the collision, the ANCO SCEPTRE sustained only minor damage but the loading facility was extensively damaged.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Coast Guard:

Institute mandatory participation in the VTS on the Houston Ship Channel. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-59)

Designate Crown Point bend as a VTS precautionary area and restrict vessels passing at the bend. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-60)

Develop vessel maneuvering guidelines for VTS and pilot use on the Houston Ship Channel concerning vessel size, draft, and speed, in relation to channel width, depth, and configuration. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-61)

Initiate action with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to survey currents in the Houston Ship Channel and make pertinent information available to mariners using the channel. (Class III, Longer Term Action) (M-79-62)

Request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to make pertinent Houston Ship Channel silting information available to mariners using the channel. (Class III, Longer Term Action) (M-79-63)

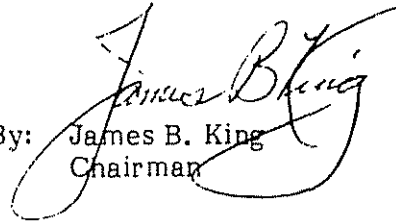
Develop with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Maritime Administration, and pilots' associations a program to indoctrinate ships' officers and pilots about the capabilities and use of VTS to improve safety on U.S. waterways. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-64)

Publicize information concerning waterway loading facility design to eliminate or minimize damage to facilities susceptible to damage from vessel collision, and incorporate appropriate precautions in regulations about the design of designated waterfront facilities. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-79-65)

Survey terminal facilities along the Houston Ship Channel to determine the extent of damage that has been caused by vessel speeds and maneuvering accidents, and institute necessary VTS controls to eliminate speed/maneuvering problems. (Class III, Longer Term Action) (M-79-66)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred with the above recommendations.

By: James B. King  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James B. King". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.