

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 29, 1981

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Forwarded to:

Mr. Leon D. Santman  
Director  
Materials Transportation Bureau  
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-81-40

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About 2044 c.s.t. on July 22, 1980, the upbound Panamanian bulk carrier M/V SEADANIEL, with a Crescent River Port Pilot's Association (CRPPA) pilot aboard, collided with the downbound German containership M/V TESTBANK, also with a CRPPA pilot on board, while meeting in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) near Shell Beach, Louisiana. The SEADANIEL took an unexpected turn to the left due to an erroneous left rudder response to the pilot's right rudder order and struck the TESTBANK raking down the port side. The damage to the SEADANIEL was light and the damage to the TESTBANK was moderate. There were no deaths or injuries caused by the accident; however, the inhabitants of Shell Beach were temporarily evacuated and the waterway closed for about 3 weeks due to the environmental pollution. 1/

As a result of the impact, one of six containers of the pesticide pentachlorophenol (PCP) entered the water. In addition, a small undetermined quantity of ethyl mercaptan and a hydrobromic acid were released. Due to the hazardous pollution of the water by the PCP, the U.S. Coast Guard closed the MRGO to waterborne traffic until August 14, 1980, and mounted a major cleanup and recovery effort including, among others, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), and numerous State of Louisiana agencies and local authorities. The State of Louisiana Health Department established a "Health and Environmental Zone." Seventy-five inhabitants of the Shell Beach area were temporarily evacuated due to the fumes.

While no Federal regulations governing the waterborne shipment of PCP were in effect at the time of the accident, international recommendations concerning stowage were in effect and were followed. If the U.S. Federal regulations that came into effect after the accident had been in effect before the accident, there would probably have been no change in the location of the shipment since the only substantial difference between the U.S. Federal regulations and the international recommendations for stowage is that the containers "should" be stowed under deck if the alternative is available.

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Collision of Panamanian Bulk Carrier M/V SEADANIEL with the German Containership M/V TESTBANK, Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, Near Shell Beach, Louisiana, July 22, 1980" (NTSB-MAR-81-8).

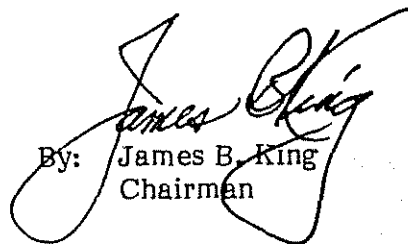
While the U.S. Coast Guard is the general enforcing agency for waterborne shipments of hazardous materials, there was no U.S. Coast Guard inspection of the contents, nor was any required. The U.S. Coast Guard port shipping checks are limited, when done, in part because the containers are generally sealed from the time of packaging. The seals may, of course, be broken, but such action would require special measures to insure that the security of the contents were not compromised. While the U.S. Coast Guard is charged with the responsibility for enforcement of the U.S. Department of Transportation's hazardous materials regulations for packaged shipments in vessels (49 CFR 171), the enforcement usually does not entail inspecting the contents of a sealed container loaded on a vessel to verify compliance.

One aspect of the shipping regulations warrants attention. Most of the hazardous material containers on the TESTBANK were located in an exposed location either outboard or forward, and all but one of the other hazardous material containers on deck were stowed next to an exposed container. The stowage of containers holding hazardous materials in these exposed locations should be reexamined because of their susceptibility to damage in even a minor collision. The stowage of such containers near the centerline of a vessel may prevent minor collisions such as this accident from becoming major environmental events; containers that were located three positions inboard on the TESTBANK were not damaged.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Materials Transportation Bureau:

In conjunction with the U. S. Coast Guard and the National Cargo Bureau, Inc., conduct an evaluation of the requirement for the stowage of containerized dangerous cargo and, if practicable, require that "on-deck" containerized dangerous cargo be stowed as close to the centerline as possible. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-81-40)

DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY, Member, concurred in this recommendation. McADAMS, Member, dissented. KING, Chairman, and GOLDMAN, Member, did not participate.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman