

M-180

ALH

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 26, 1981

Forwarded to:
Admiral John B. Hayes
Commandant
U. S. Coast Guard
Washington, D.C. 20593

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)
M-81-79 and -80

About 1410 e.s.t., on January 19, 1981, the outbound loaded U.S. flag tankship S.S. CONCHO grounded near the middle of the channel while on the range of Constable Hook Reach at the eastern end of Kill Van Kull in Upper New York Harbor. As a result, the portside bottom plating was extensively damaged when the CONCHO grounded and about 100,000 gallons of crude oil entered the water. No one was injured. Estimated cost of repair for the vessel was \$1,300,000, and the estimated cost of the oil spill cleanup to restore the environment was \$280,000. 1/

Currently, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) in New York is operational only for anchorages. The regulations governing the fully functional VTS, if followed, could have prevented this accident by restricting the CONCHO's movement since a comparison of the CONCHO's draft with the channel depth would have shown insufficient bottom clearance.

The vessel's Stability Letter, issued by the USCG, on October 27, 1970, required that a loading manual approved by the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) be used to determine hull stress. To fulfill this requirement, the CONCHO was provided with Trim and Stress Loading Instructions.

The vessel's International Load Line Certificate, dated October 1, 1979, as well as its Trim and Stress Loading Instructions, issued by the ABS, contain the following loading restriction:

For all loading conditions with a mean draft exceeding 24 feet, every two adjacent wing tanks shall be loaded to a minimum of seventy-five percent of their combined capacity.

1/ For more detailed information read, "Marine Accident Report - U.S. Tankship S.S. CONCHO Grounding Constable Hook Reach of Kill Van Kull Upper New York Harbor, January 19, 1981" (NTSB-MAR-81-11).

On December 8, 1980, the USCG approved modified loading restrictions and required that a "new trim and stability booklet" be developed for the CONCHO. On December 15, 1980, the USCG again revised the loading restrictions and required that at drafts greater than 26 feet alternative wing cargo and ballast tanks be at least 86 percent full and that these operating restrictions be used in the vessel's Trim and Stability Booklet.

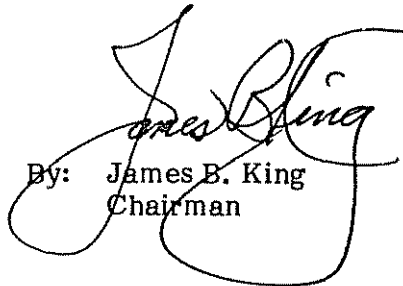
The USCG requirement when combined with a similar ABS requirement, as viewed by the vessel's master, was confusing. Since the requirements relate to such an important aspect of vessels' safety --stability-- the Safety Board believes that there should be no conflict and that the USCG and the ABS should act jointly to prevent such confusion on board vessels.

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

Before approving modified loading restrictions which vary from the vessel's Load Line Certificate, require an approved Trim and Stability Booklet which explains how to use those restrictions, and require that the American Bureau of Shipping modify the vessel's Load Line Certificate and Loading Manual accordingly. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-81-79)

In conjunction with the American Bureau of Shipping, review the CONCHO's Load Line Certificate, Trim and Stress Loading Instructions, Stability Letter, and Trim and Stability Booklet, and, where necessary, make changes so that the information is accurate regarding loading restrictions and consistent with U.S. Coast Guard requirements. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-81-80)

DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS and GOLDMAN, Members, concurred in these recommendations. KING, Chairman, and BURSLEY, Member, did not participate.


By: James B. King
Chairman