



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
**Safety Recommendation**

**Date:** April 24, 1987

**In reply refer to:** M-87-13 and -14

Admiral Paul A. Yost  
 Commandant  
 U.S. Coast Guard  
 Washington, D.C. 20093

On June 23, 1986, the 674-foot-long, British-registered bulk carrier M/V PALM PRIDE departed Burnside Terminal, Louisiana, at 0154 and proceeded downbound in the Mississippi River. At 0444 while attempting to overtake two downbound tows that were in an overtaking situation, the PALM PRIDE collided with barges in the Sioux City & New Orleans barge fleet sited along the right descending river bank in the bend at 26 Mile Point, about mile 122.6 above Head of Passes. Damage to the PALM PRIDE and the barges and their cargoes was estimated at \$1,400,000. There were no injuries reported. 1/

The SCNO barge was located along the right descending bank, extended into the bend at 26 Mile Point, and created a potential hazard for vessels transiting the bend. Large, deep draft vessels proceeding downbound favor the deeper water, and all downbound vessels, including tows, tend to take advantage of the increased strength of current along the right descending bank in this bend. Consequently, such vessels normally pass close to the SCNO barge fleet. The river current at the bend was described by the operator of the the LADY G II and the SCNO fleet mate as setting toward the SCNO fleet. The mate stated that barges moored in the fleet have been struck and damaged before by downbound vessels rounding the bend. Although the SCNO fleet is authorized to have barges extending 8-wide from the river bank into the river, the fleet was not at its full width at the time of the accident. The precise positions of the tows as they proceeded downbound past the barge fleet are unknown. However, the nearer tow, the HOPE M, was reported to have passed about 200 feet from the drydock located in the SCNO fleet. Had the SCNO fleet not extended into the bend, there would have been more room for vessel maneuvering and damage to the barges may not have occurred.

As the result of its investigation of a freighter collision with a cargo handling facility located at Good Hope, Louisiana, 2/ the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation M-80-33 to the Coast Guard:

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Collision of British Bulk Carrier M/V PALM PRIDE with the Sioux City & New Orleans Barge Fleet in the Mississippi River, near the Luling-Destrehan Bridge, June 23, 1986" (NTSB/MAR-87/3).

2/ For more detailed information, read "Marine Accident Report--Collision of Peruvian Freighter M/V INCA TUPAC YUPANQUI and U.S. Butane Barge PANAMA CITY, Good Hope, Louisiana, August 30, 1979" (NTSB-MAR-80-7).

Study the use of waterfront facilities, located in bends on the Mississippi River, for the transfer of cargoes of particular hazard listed in 33 CFR 124.14, and if necessary promulgate appropriate regulations to prohibit siting future facilities in bends.

The Coast Guard responded on February 11, 1981, that it did not concur with this safety recommendation.

. . . Coast Guard policy towards reviewing plans for proposed facilities and marine traffic engineering is to take a critical look at the design of the system as a whole . . . . The Coast Guard's desire is to encourage high standards of performance and operation of the interrelated factors of vessel, cargo, crew, route, and terminal. By careful planning beforehand, port system development can avoid many future hazards. We do not believe that Federal regulations are the answer to proper port planning. A careful review by the Corps of Engineers, Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies prior to granting permits and licenses will help solve this problem in the future.

The Safety Board on May 15, 1981 classified the recommendation as "Open—Unacceptable Action." The Safety Board believes that the PALM PRIDE accident underscores the need to prohibit the positioning of barge fleeting facilities in river bends, where such facilities will create a hazard to vessels and tows navigating the bends.

After the accident, the pilot of the PALM PRIDE promptly reported the accident by VHF FM radiotelephone to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard requested the pilot to report additional information later by telephone. However, after the pilot was relieved on board the PALM PRIDE by another pilot, he left the New Orleans area without making the requested report to the Coast Guard. Subsequent efforts by the Coast Guard investigator to contact the pilot were unsuccessful. He did not become available for an interview by investigators from the Coast Guard and the Safety Board until 10 days after the accident. Consequently, the investigators were unable to develop immediately a complete picture of the events that led to the collision. The Safety Board is especially concerned that the pilot did not make himself available after the accident since he had been directly involved in the events that led to the collision and possessed information not known to others. In the previous 5 years, this pilot had been involved in three other significant marine accidents investigated by the Safety Board. Therefore, the pilot should have known that an investigation of this accident would require his presence; however, there is no Federal regulation that requires pilots to remain available for investigative interviews immediately following an accident. The Safety Board has been informed by the Coast Guard, New Orleans that this is not an uncommon occurrence. The Safety Board has encountered this problem recently with a pilot in Alaska State waters, and it has also occurred when foreign-flag vessel crewmembers, who are critical witnesses, are repatriated immediately after an accident. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that the U.S. Coast Guard should amend 46 CFR 4.05 to require that persons involved in major marine accidents be available to Federal investigators subsequent to an accident.

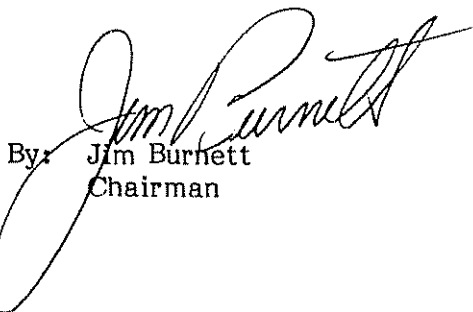
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the United States Coast Guard:

Coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in establishing a policy that prohibits future siting of barge fleeting facilities in river bends where such facilities will create a hazard to safe navigation of the bend by transiting vessels and tows. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-87-13)

Modify 46 CFR 4.05-10 to require that pilots, masters, operators, and persons in charge of the piloting, navigation, and operation of commercial vessels operating in the navigable waters of the United States remain available for investigative interviews concerning a major marine casualty or accident for not less than 24 hours following the time of occurrence unless released by the Coast Guard. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-87-14)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-87-15 and -16 to the Board of New Orleans-Baton Rouge Steamship Pilot Commissioners for the Mississippi River.

BURNETT, Chairman, and LAUBER and NALL, Members concurred in these recommendations. GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, did not participate.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman