

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: July 24, 1978

Forwarded to:

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

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-78-45 through -52

About 0500 c.d.t. on July 22, 1977, the Greek Tankship M/V DAUNTLESS COLOCOTRONIS, carrying 48,741 long tons of crude oil, was upbound in the Mississippi River about 4 miles below New Orleans, Louisiana, when it struck a sunken barge. The bottom plating of the COLOCOTRONIS was fractured, permitting cargo oil from the tanker's No. 5 center tank to enter its pumproom. Within minutes, cargo oil penetrated into the tanker's engineroom and ignited. The fire spread from the engineroom to the accommodation spaces through a door which had been tied open. All 35 persons onboard escaped from the vessel; 2 persons were slightly injured. Fire damage in the accommodation spaces, water damage in the engineroom, and bottom structural damage was estimated to be \$6 million. 1/

Although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) had determined in January 1974 that the sunken barge was a hazard to navigation, the sunken barge was neither removed nor its location marked between February 1974 and the time of this accident. In February 1974, the COE requested that the Coast Guard replace the missing buoy over the wreck. The Coast Guard advised the COE that because of the high water conditions and the expense of maintaining a buoy, it was discontinuing the buoy but that the decision would be reviewed as changing river conditions and future soundings warranted. Subsequently, a buoy was not reestablished when the river level fell.

The Safety Board believes that better procedures could be established between the Coast Guard and the COE for the marking and removing of wrecks in the Mississippi River. Furthermore, an annual summary of all wrecks that constitute a hazard to navigation would provide ship operators with updated information on the location and depth of water over wrecks.

1/ For more detailed information read "M/V DAUNTLESS COLOCOTRONIS Grounding in Mississippi River near New Orleans, Louisiana, July 22, 1977," (NTSB-MAR-78-5).

The Mississippi River has a mean difference between high and low stages of about 14 feet annually. The COE keeps a continuous record of the river level with zero representing mean sea level. Therefore, it is important that the Coast Guard include the level of the river when stating the depth of water over wrecks in "Local Notices to Mariners."

The extent and duration of the fire were the result of several factors, including lack of firefighting drills and inadequate firefighting training for the crew and the use of combustible materials in the accommodation spaces. There had been no firefighting drills aboard the COLOCOTRONIS for 3 1/2 months before the accident. The proper use of a firehose on the oil fire might have extinguished the fire before any extensive damage occurred. The closing of all doors from the engineroom would have prevented the spreading of the fire to the accommodation spaces, and the use of noncombustible materials in the accommodation spaces would have limited the intensity of the fire.

The firefighting effort was delayed by the lack of information regarding the arrangement of the tankship. An arrangement plan posted on the outside of the deckhouse would have provided the rescue personnel with valuable information.

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

Develop, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, standards that will define what constitutes a hazard to navigation in the Mississippi River so that the Coast Guard can better enforce 33 CFR Part 64. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-45)

Prepare, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an annual summary of wrecks that continue to be a hazard to navigation in the Mississippi River and distribute the summary in a manner similar to a Local Notice to Mariners. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-46)

Insure that depths of water over wrecks in the Mississippi River are stated in terms of mean sea level in Local Notices to Mariners and Broadcasts to Mariners. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-47)

Seek international agreement to improve the firefighting training for officers and crew on tankships. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-48)

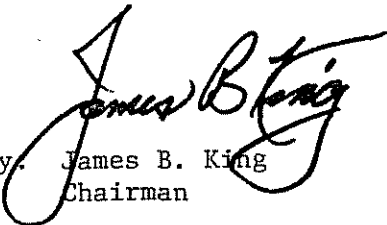
Insure that all foreign tankships that enter U.S. waters comply with the 1960 Safety of Life at Sea Convention requirements for fire drills. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-49)

Develop regulations, under the Ports and Waterways Act of 1972, that require all foreign tankships built after 1980 and entering U.S. waters to meet the fire safety requirements of the 1974 Safety of Life At Sea Convention. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-50)

Seek international agreement to require all ships of more than 500 gross tons to post, under watertight cover and outside the ship's deckhouse in a prominent place, an arrangement plan of the ship to aid emergency personnel. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-51)

Seek international agreement to require that cargo pumps on tankships be segregated from all sources of vapor ignition by gastight bulkheads and that pump shafts penetrating these bulkheads be fitted with stuffing boxes or other approved glands which will prevent vapor ignition. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-52)

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

By:  James B. King  
Chairman

