

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: July 24, 1978

Forwarded to:

Chief of Engineers  
Department of the Army  
10th & Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20314

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-78-53 through -55

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, the 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).

Although the sunken barge was located on September 14, 1977, in the same position where it was originally reported sunk on January 16, 1974, the COE had been unable to locate the barge during a survey in July 1974 and a special survey at the request of the Coast Guard in early August 1977. Even when the Coast Guard requested the COE on August 12, 1977, to conduct further surveys, the COE was unable to locate the sunken barge using its normal fathometer equipment. The barge was only located after the COE hired a survey company to conduct a magnetometer survey.

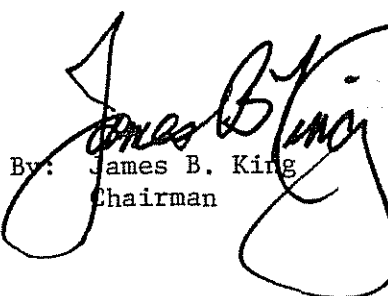
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

Develop, in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard, 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-78-53)

Provide information to the U.S. Coast Guard concerning wrecks that continue to be a hazard to navigation in the Mississippi River so the Coast Guard can publish an annual summary of such wrecks. (Class II, Priority Action)  
(M-78-54)

Adopt or develop improved techniques for locating the position of wrecks and determining the depth of water over wrecks in the Mississippi River.  
(Class II, Priority Action) (M-78-55)

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

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman