

Log M-377A



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: February 7, 1992

In Reply Refer To: M-92-5

Mr. Robert Reid
President and Chief Executive Officer
Pacific Resources, Inc.
733 Boshop Street, Suite 3100
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

On November 6, 1990, the 723-foot-long U.S. tank ship STAR CONNECTICUT completed loading cargo and began unmooring operations from single point mooring (spm) buoy off Barbers Point, Hawaii; the spm buoy was owned by Hawaiian Independent Refinery, Inc., (HIRI). The mooring master who was in charge of maneuvering the vessel during the unmooring operations, was stationed on the ship's bow. The ship's master was on watch in the pilothouse.

After the ship released the mooring chain and became free of the spm buoy, the mooring master passed the conn to the navigation bridge where the ship's master assumed control. The master maneuvered the vessel to pass inshore of the spm buoy. He then slowed the vessel and stopped the engine to allow a launch to come alongside. After several unsuccessful attempts, the launch operator maneuvered the launch alongside the tanker and the cargo gauger, the ship's agent, and the mooring master-in-training disembarked. Once the launch cleared the STAR CONNECTICUT, a service vessel came alongside the tanker and the mooring master disembarked. As soon as the service vessel cleared the tanker's side, the master began to turn the STAR CONNECTICUT to the south to head for deep water. Moments later the vessel's stern grounded on a reef.

Although no loss of life or personal injury resulted from this accident, the STAR CONNECTICUT suffered approximately \$4 million in damages. The grounding also posed a risk of a major oil spill which could have caused great environmental harm to the Hawaiian Islands. After the STAR CONNECTICUT was refloated and damage was assessed, the vessel was declared a constructive total loss.¹

¹For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report--"Grounding of the U.S. Tankship STAR CONNECTICUT Pacific Ocean, Near Barbers Point, Hawaii November 6, 1990." (NTSB/MAR-92/01).

Among other safety issues this accident report addresses the adequacy of vessel operating procedures for departing from the spm buoy at Barbers Point, Hawaii.

During the accident investigation, the STAR CONNECTICUT's master testified that there were no formalized procedures for unmooring from the HIRI spm buoy similar to those for mooring to the buoy. The Safety Board agrees that a predeparture conference between a master and a mooring master is a necessary procedure. The Safety Board believes that before the unmooring operation commenced, the master and the mooring master should have discussed what procedures they would follow for departing from the spm buoy, the manner and timing of the transfer of the conn, the intended direction from which the ship would leave the buoy, the timing and location for the transfer of personnel to the launch and any other matters relevant to the safety of operations.

The Safety Board has found that the problem of poor communication and planning between ships' masters and pilots prior to executing a potentially jeopardous maneuver continues to be a direct and/or contributory cause of major marine accidents. As early as 1974, as a result of its investigation of the AFRICAN NEPTUNE² accident where a U.S. freighter rammed the Sidney Lanier Bridge at Brunswick, Georgia, the Safety Board recommended that the U.S. Coast Guard:

M-74-15

Require that every master of an ocean-going vessel inform himself of the pilot's plan to maneuver his ship in or out of a harbor and that the master determine, with the pilot's assistance, the critical aspects of the maneuver, including the pilot's plan for emergencies.

Most recently, as a result of its investigation of the collision between the Greek tank ship SHINOUSSA and the U.S. Towboat CHANDY N,³ the Safety Board recommended that the Coast Guard:

M-91-28

Amend 33 CFR 164.11(k) to require that masters and pilots discuss and agree beforehand to the essential features and relevant checkpoints of maneuvers they expect to undertake.

Between 1974 and 1991, the Safety Board has repeatedly made recommendations to the U.S. Coast Guard and several pilots association regarding the need for discussions between masters and pilots and/or plans prior to maneuvers for no fewer than eight major accident reports. Poor planning/communication is obviously a recurring problem that continues to result in major marine accidents. The Safety Board views the role of the mooring master in the same light as that of a

²For more detailed information, read "SS AFRICAN NEPTUNE: Collision with the Sidney Lanier Bridge at Brunswick, Georgia, on November 7, 1972, with Loss of Life (NTSB/MAR-74/04).

³For more detailed information, read "Collision Between the Greek Tankship SHINOUSSA and the U.S. Towboat CHANDY N and tow Near Red Fish Island, Galveston Bay, Texas, July 28, 1990" (NTSB/MAR-91/03).

ship's pilot. The Safety Board therefore believes that the Coast Guard should require that masters of all tank ships arriving and departing from offshore oil transfer facilities conduct prearrival and predeparture conferences with the mooring masters to plan intended maneuvers.

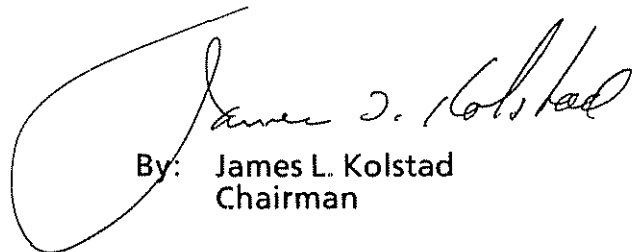
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Hawaiian Independent Refinery, Inc.:

Require that, prior to unmooring from the Barbers Point spm buoy, mooring masters participate in a predeparture conference with the ship's master to discuss the weather and sea conditions, and to specify what unmooring procedures they intend to follow, what path the ship will take to sea, when they will pass the conn to the ship's master or navigation watch officer, and any other matters relevant to the safety of operations. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-92-5)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations M-92-1 through -4 to the U.S. Coast Guard; and Safety Recommendations M-92-6 through -8 to the Texaco Marine Services, Inc. The Safety Board is also reiterating Safety Recommendation M-91-6 to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation M-92-5 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Chairman, COUGHLIN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER, HART and HAMMERSCHMIDT, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: James L. Kolstad
Chairman