

21-113

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 5, 1980

Forwarded to:

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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-80-6 through -8

At 0420, on October 3, 1978, the Panamanian S/T TEXACO IOWA collided with the Liberian M/T BURMAH SPAR while both tank vessels were inbound and maneuvering in the pilot exchange area off Pilottown, Louisiana. The total damage to the vessels was estimated at \$680,000. No one was injured in the accident. 1/

The inbound TEXACO IOWA entered the Mississippi River via the Southwest Pass. It was under the navigation control of a bar pilot and scheduled to arrive off Pilottown 5 minutes after the BURMAH SPAR's arrival. The bar pilot estimated his vessel's speed at 12.5 mph, or 10.9 kns, over the ground, against an estimated 1.5- to 2.0-kn current while proceeding in the Southwest Pass. Before reaching Pilottown, the bar pilot radio-telephoned the pilot station watchman to give a 30-minute advance notice of the vessel's arrival.

While approaching the Pilottown pilot exchange area, the TEXACO IOWA's master became concerned about his vessel's speed because of the rapid closing with the BURMAH SPAR which was then in the process of changing pilots. The master requested the bar pilot to reduce the speed, and the pilot complied by reducing the engine rpm from full-ahead to dead-slow, whereupon the vessel sheered to port. The bar pilot attributed the sheering to the rapid engine speed reduction. The bar pilot then ordered full right rudder to correct the vessel's heading. Meanwhile, the vessel continued to close with the BURMAH SPAR, from almost directly astern. Realizing that collision was imminent, the master personally ordered full left rudder and full speed ahead in an attempt to avoid hitting the BURMAH SPAR. The maneuver to avoid collision was unsuccessful, however, and the TEXACO IOWA's bow struck and its stern quarter raked the BURMAH SPAR's port stern quarter as it passed.

The TEXACO IOWA's bar pilot said that he had not intended to pass the BURMAH SPAR. The bar pilot underestimated the vessel's speed, and despite adequate navigable

1/ For more detailed information, read "Marine Accident Report - Collision of the S/T TEXACO IOWA with the M/T BURMAH SPAR on the Mississippi River, Pilottown, Louisiana, October 3, 1978." (NTSB-MAR-80-3)

waterway for passing and maneuvering, he followed too closely in the track of the BURMAH SPAR. As the TEXACO IOWA closed with the BURMAH SPAR, which was then increasing speed, the BURMAH SPAR's river pilot stopped his vessel's engine just before the collision. The stopping of the BURMAH SPAR's engine may have contributed to the extent of damage.

Although both vessels had bridge-to-bridge radiotelephones and the pilots had portable radiotelephones, this equipment was not properly used to communicate maneuvering intentions, and communications between the vessels were not established until after the accident.

The TEXACO IOWA did not observe the Inland Rules of the Road or the Pilot Rules for Inland Waters for an overtaking situation. No whistle signals were sounded by either vessel.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Associated Branch Pilots and the Crescent River Port Pilots Association:

Review the pilot exchange boarding and radiotelephone communications practices used off Pilottown and establish a policy by which (1) the bar and river pilots maintain uninterrupted communications during the pilot exchange, and (2) that they communicate vessel course and speed information and their maneuvering intentions. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-80-6)

Request member pilots to inform vessel masters concerning the requirements of 33 CFR 164, Navigation Safety Regulations, and advise member pilots to use the navigation bridge watch to keep themselves advised of the vessel's position and speed. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-80-7)

Encourage member pilots to monitor their portable radiotelephones while directing vessel movements until they are properly relieved of their responsibility. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-80-8)

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


By: James B. King
Chairman