

requests often happen in good weather and so masters and bridge teams are more relaxed and less alert.

Owners should give their masters guidance in these situations and unless it is for weather reasons (and also safe to do so) letting the pilot leave early or picking him up at an inshore location should be carefully considered. The master should consider the risks, including his own familiarity with the port and its approaches, have a passage plan and a full bridge team available. These judgements should not be just driven by commercial pressure.

CASE STUDY

The bulk carrier with an experienced master was leaving a port to which he had been to many times before. The ship left the berth behind schedule during the late afternoon and in good weather, when the pilot told the master that he wanted to disembark before the designated pilot station. This request turned out later to be for the pilot's personal reasons.

The pilot did not leave the master with information of what courses to take, what dangers to avoid and/or any information about incoming or outgoing traffic. The watchkeeper had accompanied the pilot to the main deck to disembark and, during this period, the master was alone on the bridge. No positions were maintained on the chart and the master was navigating by 'eye'. For reasons that can only be explained as human error, the master steered the ship the wrong side of a navigational mark and it ran onto submerged rocks, which ripped out the double bottom tanks. The wreck removal and oil pollution costs were significant.

LESSONS LEARNT

- masters should always be very aware of the significant risks that can arise when pilots leave or join the ship before/after the pilot station. Safety management systems should give the master guidance on what should be done in these circumstances. For a number of reasons, the master may not be aware of the full circumstances surrounding the navigation of the ship within the port area. These could include, VTS/pilot relationships, language, local conditions including currents and tidal conditions, fairway depths and draft restrictions, incoming and outgoing traffic, local passing protocols, restrictions, problems with ships in the vicinity, and so on
- masters must ensure a proper handover briefing is given, including full information required for the remainder of the passage if the pilot insists on leaving before he should
- masters should always proceed at a safe speed with or without a pilot, especially within port limits. If the master is left without a pilot, he should always proceed with caution and with a full bridge team
- masters should not relax when navigating (or anchoring) within port areas covered by VTS, as experience shows many ports have VTS arrangements that are not always competent.

OTHER NAVIGATIONAL CONCERNS

NAVIGATING IN SOUTH AMERICAN/AFRICAN RIVERS

The club has experienced a number of significant claims arising from ships navigating in major South American and African rivers. The Marshall Islands administration issued a notice in November 2011 concerning navigational incidents on South American rivers.

"Within the past six months the Maritime Administrator has received six reports of Republic of the Marshall Islands flagged ships grounding during transits of rivers and ports in South America. the overall impacts have been significant.

The underlying factors/root causes of the reported groundings have been:

- *Insufficient coordination between local pilot and harbour tugs*
- *Unpredictable shoaling conditions and strong currents; and,*
- *Inadequate coordination amongst the pilot augmented bridge teams."*

The club's experience mirrors this but with significant grounding and pollution claims. Navigating in these rivers is not easy and owners should provide as much support to their masters as possible before the ship arrives so that the river passage can be planned. The charted information is not always up to date or accurate. Rivers such as the Orinoco River are major rivers that may not be hydrographically mapped out regularly, water depths are uncertain, the course of the river is often changing with shifting sandbanks, navigational marks such as buoys and lights may move because of the currents and moving river beds, and navigational lights are often not operational. These therefore produce significant navigational challenges.

The pilots may be knowledgeable, but their English is often limited and so communication may be hampered. Currents can be considerable and increased by rains, and some of these pilotages can often be over 24 hours in duration and the pilots themselves can become very fatigued. Full bridge teams are required and passages should be carefully planned and monitored.

ANCHORING IN CONGESTED ANCHORAGES

Anchoring in congested anchorages is a frequent cause of major incidents. There are often collisions with other ships or fouling of subsea cables and pipelines. Congested anchorages are extremely hazardous places to navigate in, particularly with a large ship, and masters should give careful consideration to the risks when asked to anchor in these areas. As with incidents occurring when berthing or manoeuvring in a port area, too high a speed is often a significant contributing cause.

A number of collisions also have occurred, for example in the Singapore or Chittagong anchorage areas, when ships have dragged their anchors or when manoeuvring to and from an anchorage position. The fact is that the ships are often too close to each other so as not to provide a reasonable margin of error. Even in apparently benign waters, currents and strong winds can have a significant impact on the ship's passage.

Guidance should be available to masters about the dangers associated with congested anchorages. It is also a fact that commercial pressure is an underlying cause of these incidents in congested anchorages.

A special edition of the *Standard Safety* on anchoring was issued in October 2008 <http://www.standard-club.com/KnowledgeCentre/14.aspx?p=172> and this publication provides useful information.

FISH FARMS

In recent years, the club has seen a rise in claims that resulted from collision damage to fish farms, mussel beds and other aquatic agricultural activities. Fish farming or other sea agricultural activities have sprung up in many places, including the Norwegian Islands, Chilean, Japanese and Chinese coasts, off the west coast of Scotland, the Mediterranean Sea and other areas. Many of these will be noted by the hydrographical survey offices and marked on the charts; however, a number of them are not reported to the hydrographical authorities and are not noted on the charts, although they may be reported locally in the temporary and preliminary notices and/or local navigational broadcasts.

These farms are usually located relatively close to shore, although often in deep enough water for large ships to navigate in. China is a good example of this. Usually they are lit, but often with weak lights on low 'stick' buoys, so they are not easily seen in poor weather conditions. Damage to these structures results in large claims since the farming stock is often of high value.