



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

SECTOR DETROIT

February 8, 2019
Detroit, MI

Findings of Concern 004-19

Crewmember Experience and Familiarity Requirements

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. In June of 2018, a U.S. Flagged Laker ran aground while exiting a harbor on the Great Lakes. The casualty investigation concluded that the grounding was attributed to rapid currents caused by large amounts of rainfall over the previous 48 hours. There was no damage reported to the vessel as a result of the grounding. Almost two weeks later, with the same Captain onboard, and in command of the vessel, the Laker allided with a pier face while coming about to moor at a facility within the river system of the Great Lakes. Estimates indicated approximately \$325,000 to \$350,000 worth of damage to the bow stem area and associated forepeak framing.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. The investigation into the allision with the pier face identified lack of experience or familiarity on the class or type of vessel to be a significant contributing factor that led to the incident with fatigue and discomfort after surgery playing a secondary role.

46 CFR 15.405 requires that each credentialed crewmember must become familiar with the relevant characteristics of the vessel appropriate to his or her duties and responsibilities prior to assuming those duties and responsibilities. As appropriate, these may include, but are not limited to, general arrangement of the vessel, maneuvering characteristics, proper operation of the installed navigation equipment, proper operation of firefighting and lifesaving equipment, stability and loading characteristics, emergency duties, and main propulsion and auxiliary machinery, including steering gear systems and controls.

At the time of the second marine casualty, the Master had been onboard the Laker for approximately 16 days. The Master reportedly took two weeks recovery time after a surgery in May of 2018. He was cleared by a local physician and returned to work aboard the Laker in early June of 2018. The previous 20 years' experience reported by the Master was aboard vessels of a smaller class (approx. 700'), which he stated were more maneuverable and responsive to changes in thrust and direction. In preparation for the transition to a larger class of Laker (990-1000'), the company reported that he was sent to simulator training and provided with a two day ride aboard a similar class vessel. However, the Captain stated that while the vessels were similar in size, they had different machinery and fuel systems, and, in his words, "reacted differently." Upon further inquiry, it was discovered that the ride along aboard the "similar vessel" occurred on or about May of 2017, one year prior to the assignment, and the



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simulator training was prior to that. The company was unable to provide any formal policy or procedure for shifting a Captain between different classes of vessels or transitioning them back after an extended off period only stating that for someone with this Captain's experience, "That is all that is necessary."

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures that could be implemented by owners/operators of similar vessels in similar service to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Companies should implement formal, written Policy and Procedures to ensure personnel are in compliance with regulatory requirements for crewmembers transitioning between different vessel classes.
- In the case of the Master, this should include an appropriate time in command of the vessel to be served upon to ensure compliance with the regulation and prevent future casualties.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact Sector Detroit Investigations Division by phone at (313) 568-9555 or by email at detroitinspections@uscg.mil.