

## SUMMARY

On the day in question, tugboats BONDEN and SVITZER BJÖRN were to assist the car carrier ASIAN BREEZE, with pilot on board, to berth in Malmö's free port. ASIAN BREEZE had ordered two tugboats due to the ship's bow thruster being out of order. The ship would normally use just one tugboat connected at the aft.

When the pilot came on board ASIAN BREEZE, the ship had a speed of 7-8 knots. The pilot immediately requested a stop of the engine and then astern in order to reduce the speed and connect the tugboats before the ship came too far into fairway. It was not until this stage that the pilot received the information that the bow thruster was not functioning. The pilot knew in advance that two tugboats had been ordered instead of the normal one, but he assumed that this was due to the strong winds earlier that day.

SVITZER BJÖRN was connected to the stern, after which the connection of BONDEN forward commenced. However, the vessel was soon running short on time as ASIAN BREEZE had begun to approach the harbour entrance. The pilot therefore announced that ASIAN BREEZE would complete a full turn to starboard in order to gain time. BONDEN was connected during the turn, but was forced at an early stage to perform an emergency release of the towline.

BONDEN, which was to retrieve the released towline hanging from the central fairlead of the car carrier, proceeded to manoeuvre in close and beneath the bow of ASIAN BREEZE. At the same time, the pilot interrupted the starboard turn and commenced a turn to port instead, which was not perceived by BONDEN. At this point, the tugboat was subject to a sudden and involuntary turn to starboard, which was likely caused by the interaction between the two vessels. The tug master initiated full speed ahead and hard starboard rudder in an attempt to avoid a collision. BONDEN nevertheless collided with ASIAN BREEZE, whose bulbous bow made contact with the ship to stern and the propeller of BONDEN. The tugboat's main engine stopped and BONDEN proceeded to drift along ASIAN BREEZE's starboard side.

According to SHK, the accident was caused by a lack of planning and inadequate implementation of the connection procedure, partly due to the lack of national and standardised routines for connecting ships and tugboats.

A contributory factor to the accident was that the pilot had not been informed prior to the pilot assignment that the ship's bow thruster was out of order, meaning the pilot had far too little time together with the captain and the involved tugboats to prepare for the arrival to port. If the pilot had known beforehand that the bow thruster was out of order, he would have chosen to board the car carrier at an ear-

lier point in time – as is standard when several tugboats are to be connected – in order to allow more time for the connecting procedure.

Another contributory factor to the accident was that the tug master did not perceive the ship's interruption of its starboard turn and subsequent immediate turn to port.

In the report, SHK also discusses the fact that the communication regarding the connection procedure between the pilot and the tug masters was held in Swedish. As neither the master nor the rest of the crew of ASIAN BREEZE spoke Swedish, the conditions were not optimal for them to follow the sequence of events, despite the fact that the pilot was continuously translating what was being said. However, it has not been established that the language barrier was of crucial significance in the accident. On the other hand, SHK has not been able to rule out that the master would have been able to intervene in another manner and thus prevent the accident if he had understood the communication between the pilot and the tugboats in its entirety. If all communication on the bridge takes place in a language which all those involved understand, there would – according to SHK – be less stress on the pilot and the possibility for the master to react to and act on inappropriate practices would be considerably improved.

### **Safety recommendations**

#### **Recommendations to the Swedish Maritime Administration, in consultation with the tugboat industry:**

- Introduce standardised national procedures regarding orders given between pilots and tugboat crews and develop and conduct relevant training in the area prior to implementation. See section 2.6. (*RS 2016:01 R1*)
- Introduce standardised national routines regarding connection procedures between ships and tugboats and develop and conduct relevant training in the area prior to implementation. See section 2.2. (*RS 2016:01 R2*)
- Introduce the use of English in its procedures, or another language agreed on which is understood by all parties involved, as a working language for all national pilotage including tugboat management. See section 2.5. (*RS 2016:01 R3*)

#### **The Swedish Maritime Administration is recommended to:**

- Develop systems and procedures which enable pilots to obtain all necessary and relevant information in good time prior to pilotage, including any

faults and deficiencies on the ship in question. See section 2.1.  
(RS 2016:01 R4)

**The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended to:**

- Look into the possibility to change the wording of Chapter 4, Section 8 of the Swedish Transport Agency's Regulations and General Advice (TSFS 2012:38) on Pilotage so that the language agreed on for pilotage also covers communication with any external parties. See section 2.5. (RS 2016:01 R5)