

SUMMARY

Loading of the RoPax vessel HUCKLEBERRY FINN began on the evening of 19 August, ahead of a departure for Poland. It was expected that the vessel would be fully loaded with vehicles. The cargo primarily consisted of semi-trailer trucks, but also a small number of cars and buses. The crew on the cargo deck were responsible for loading.

Loading of the vessel took place through a cargo officer distributing the vehicles between different cargo decks, where additional crew members directed the vehicles to a parking space. The main deck was made up of six lanes distributed evenly on either side of the vessel's centre casing. Two ordinary seamen were responsible for loading on their individual sides of the main deck. One of the two ordinary seamen was in charge of a deck apprentice who was only observing the loading.

The ordinary seamen initially worked in the same lane, loading the first two semi-trailer trucks. In conjunction with loading, the first semi-trailer truck needed to be reversed. No check took place to verify that the space behind the semitrailer truck was clear. Nor had the reversing manoeuvre been communicated to the two other crew members on the main deck. At the same time, the second semitrailer truck was directed to park behind the first. Once the second semitrailer truck had been parked, one of the ordinary seamen walked between the two semitrailer trucks and was crushed between them. The driver of the parked semi-trailer truck saw what was happening and reversed his vehicle. At which point the ordinary seaman fell onto the cargo deck, in a lot of pain but conscious.

An ambulance was called but, due to misunderstanding in the communication between the crew and the terminal staff, there was a delay before the alarm call was made. The ordinary seaman suffered no lasting injuries and was able to return to work after a period of sick leave.

Causes of the accident

Deficiencies in the company's risk analysis and procedures have led to the semi-trailer truck being reversed without it first having been ensured that the space behind the semi-trailer truck was clear of obstructions.

Contributing factors have been that the ordinary seamen have had to work without the support of more experienced crew, in spite of the fact that they had limited experience of the duties. Shortcomings in terms of communication have also contributed to the crew not understanding each other's intentions in conjunction with the loading procedure.

Underlying factors were that:

- instructions concerning duties were communicated in Swedish, which has resulted in those members of the crew who did not speak Swedish not having received complete information about the work involved in the loading operation and the prerequisites for this,
- the company had not ensured that the crew had the knowledge required in order to perform their duties, and
- there were no established instructions for how vehicles were to be reversed on the cargo deck.

Safety recommendations

TT-Line GmbH & Co. KG is recommended to:

- Ensure that appropriate action is taken for the purpose of managing and communicating risks identified as being present in conjunction with loading and unloading (see section 3.2). (*SHK 2023:11 R1*)
- Revise its procedures with respect to how instructions and other information are conveyed to all concerned parties on board (see section 3.2). (*SHK 2023:11 R2*)
- In the event of an emergency, ensure that the person who contacts external assistance is able to convey an up-to-date view of the emergency situation (see section 3.3). (*SHK 2023:11 R3*)

The Swedish Transport Agency is recommended to:

- Investigate how equivalent supervision of the work environment can be ensured for vessels that have delegated supervision and for vessels on which the Swedish Transport Agency conducts periodic supervision. This investigation should include an assessment of what consequences the difference in how the work environment is supervised may have from the perspective of safety. (see section 3.5). (*SHK 2023:11 R4*)