



NORWEGIAN HULL CLUB

## CASUALTY INFORMATION NO. 57 – NOVEMBER 2006

Norwegian Hull Club wishes to contribute to increased safety on board, focusing on **Lives, Health, Environment** and **Assets and extracting Useful Experience**.

Maintaining situational awareness is crucial in order to keep operational safety manageable. So if you lose that awareness, chances are high that you and your ship will be involved in an incident that will jeopardize safety.

### COURSE OF EVENTS:

#### THE HAZARDS OF TUNNEL VISION

It was during dark hours and the fully loaded ship was entering shallow waters. Her port of call was small, and the ship required a pilot to take her safely into the destined terminal. The approach from open waters was easy to navigate, and the plan was to pick up the pilot approximately two nautical miles from the buoyed and lighted, dredged channel.

Another port, only a few miles away from our ship's port of call had a similar entrance. The inlet was dredged, buoyed and marked with flashing lights and it appeared that the lights illuminated much brighter.

Communication was established between the Captain and the pilot, and they agreed to embark the pilot at a specific location. When the ship reached the pick up location, the pilot boat was still underway, a fact that obviously confused the Captain. He proceeded further to the east, and maintained a speed of nine knots.

Some ten minutes after the ship passed the pre-planned position of the pilot pick up, the Captain realises that the ship is steaming towards the entrance of the other harbour. The Captain immediately slows down and turns hard to starboard towards open sea, but too late. A few seconds later the ship runs heavily aground.

### DISCUSSION:

In this case it seems as though the Captain, and the rest of his bridge team of entrusted officers have suffered from a collective loss of situational awareness.

There also seems to have been miscommunication and poor common understanding of what the pilot and the Captain expected from each other.

Passing through the entrance point with nine knots suggests that the bridge team is not really navigating. The position of the ship is obviously not plotted frequently and you may argue that the ship's command in this crucial moment is only navigating on

their perceptions of the real world. Because of the similarities between the approaches to the ports, because the buoys are flashing brighter and because the optical characteristics of the flashing lights are ignored, the Captain truly believes he is doing the right thing. His perception of reality is twisted, but in his own mind he's convinced.

This parochial view or tunnel vision will appear whenever an organisation or a team does not control each other, and where



(Illustration photo only)

there seems to be a strong hierarchical command structure (or a total lack of such).

Strong bridge team management and modern principles of leadership will reduce the probability of perceiving the real world wrongly.

### USEFUL EXPERIENCE

- Adopt best practices and work as team, rather than individuals within a stringent hierarchy.