

SYNOPSIS

At 1351 on 14 April 2007, the UK registered product tanker *Audacity* was involved in a collision with the Panama registered general cargo ship *Leonis*, in very poor visibility, in the precautionary area at the entrance to the River Humber. Both vessels sustained damage to their bows. Fortunately there were no injuries and no pollution was caused.

Audacity had been outward bound from Immingham Oil Terminal and was approaching the precautionary area in order to disembark her pilot. *Leonis* had entered the precautionary area from seaward and had just completed embarking her pilot.

The MAIB investigation found that the operation of the bridge team on *Audacity* was inadequate, and the extent of the VTS area and VTS powers was not clearly understood by the VTS operators.

The investigation identified contributing factors to the accident; these included:

- The pilots and bridge teams, on both vessels, did not make a full assessment of the risk of collision.
- VTS procedures for managing traffic in the precautionary area were insufficient.
- VTS operators were unaware of the poor visibility in parts of the VTS area.
- Humber VTS did not have a formal operating procedure for periods of reduced visibility.
- Communications were poor.
- The Port Authority misunderstood how risk assessment could be used to improve the effectiveness of the VTS operations.

As a result of this accident, Associated British Ports Humber Estuary Services (ABP HES) has taken several actions to improve the performance of the VTS, pilots and pilot boarding operations.

Recommendations have been made to: the UK Major Ports Group/British Ports Association regarding the situational awareness of pilots immediately prior to boarding vessels; and to the ABP Group to develop policies covering headline issues, which can be implemented and monitored in all ports within the Group.