

SYNOPSIS



On the evening of 12 December 2000, MRSC Humber informed the MAIB that the bulk carrier *Xuchanghai* had collided with the shuttle oil tanker *Aberdeen*, which was berthed at the western end of the Immingham Oil Terminal (IOT). An investigation began the following day.

Xuchanghai was inbound for the Immingham Dock laden with 27,672 tonnes of Ilmenite. She had a pilot embarked and had secured a tug on her bow before she reached the oil terminal. A second tug was positioned at the stern, but her tow wire was not connected until immediately prior to the collision.

In anticipation of having to turn off the entrance to Immingham Dock, the pilot reduced the vessel's speed as she approached the eastern end of the oil terminal. Making only 3 knots through the water, with a 20-knot wind on her port quarter, and in a strong flood stream, *Xuchanghai* lost steerage and turned towards *Aberdeen*. The pilot took corrective action using helm, engine and the bow tug, but failed to prevent *Xuchanghai* colliding with *Aberdeen*.

The investigation highlighted the following key factors:

1. The vessel's speed was insufficient to maintain steerage in the prevailing conditions.
2. *Xuchanghai* was scheduled off Immingham one hour earlier than was considered the optimum time.
3. The stern tug was unable to assist until immediately prior to the collision.

Recommendations addressed to Associated British Ports aim at improving the safety arrangements and procedures for vessels proceeding to Immingham Dock, and other vessels in the vicinity of the Immingham Oil Terminal. Others, to *Xuchanghai*'s owner, are aimed at ensuring pilots are provided with appropriate information when boarding its vessels, and that masters and navigational watchkeeping officers have an adequate knowledge of the English language for safe pilotage operations.