DELTA MARINER ACCIDENT REPORT

Failure to use navigational tools and bridge team’s reliance on contract pilot.

On 14\textsuperscript{th} May the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) announced from Washington that it had determined that the 2012 allision of mv \textit{Delta Mariner} with the Eggner’s Ferry Bridge in Kentucky was caused by the reliance of the vessel’s bridge team on the independent contract pilot who provided incorrect navigational direction. Contributing factors included the failure of deck officers on the vessel to use all available navigation tools to verify the vessel’s position and proper route under the bridge; the failure of the crew to prepare an adequate detailed passage plan; and, the lack of effective management and oversight of the bridge lighting system.

On the evening of 26\textsuperscript{th} January 2012, \textit{Delta Mariner}, a US-flagged cargo vessel travelling on the Tennessee River, near Aurora, Kentucky, allided with the partially lit Eggner’s Ferry Bridge as it attempted to pass through the lowest of four navigable spans of the bridge. As a result, a 322-foot span of the bridge, including a portion of US Highway 68, was torn away.

As \textit{Delta Mariner} approached the Eggner’s Ferry Bridge, the crew had at their disposal the Army Corps of Engineers chart book and an electronic charting display system, which would have provided critical information about the vessel’s position and the correct bridge lighting scheme. However, the vessel was directed towards the only lit span and away from the main span that would have provided sufficient clearance.

In addition to the performance of the crew, the investigation found: a lack of effective implementation of the vessel owner’s safety management system; the lack of effective maintenance and oversight of bridge navigational lighting; and the lack of adequately defined responsibilities for \textit{Delta Mariner}’s contract pilots.

In the course of its investigation, in April 2012, the NTSB issued two safety recommendations to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) to improve the maintenance of navigational lights on bridges and the need to develop inspection and maintenance procedures to ensure such lighting functions reliably. These safety recommendations were closed last November after the KYTC completed the recommended actions.
For a complete summary of this accident investigation and to view the recommendations the NTSB made to the U.S. Coast Guard, the Federal Highway Administration and Foss Maritime Company, readers are invited to click on the following link: http://www.ntsb.gov/news/events/2013/aurora_ky/presentations/Abstract_%20Delta_Mariner.pdf.