Vessel grounding alongside third-party wharf - BMAPA Alert

WHAT HAPPENED

A UK marine aggregate dredger became grounded alongside a third-party wharf on the Thames river after the cargo being discharged was rejected and the pilot was unable to access the jetty to attend the vessel.

Summary

A UK marine aggregate dredger was delivering a cargo to a third-party wharf – the first time the vessel had visited this wharf for over 10 years. There was no up-to-date berth information onboard and no soundings were requested from the berth operator. The Master, who was new to the company and had just joined the vessel, had been briefed on the mooring arrangements by the previous Master.

It had been initially arranged for the vessel to arrive at the wharf two hours before HW (1704), but subsequently the schedule had been changed. The vessel berthed with a pilot onboard at 1725 and once discharge commenced the tide was starting to fall away. The vessel was also taking bunkers while alongside, and the pilot for departure was ordered for 2300.

Shortly after discharge started the Master was told by the wharf operative that the clay content in the cargo was too high and ordered to stop discharging at 1820 after only a few scrapes of cargo were discharged. At 1900, the company informed the Master that the cargo had been rejected by the customer and to order a pilot as soon as possible to depart the berth and to take the cargo to an alternate wharf.

The Master called VTS and ordered a pilot for departure at 2100, but because the Master was unaware of the depth of water on the berth and the associated risk of grounding VTS was not informed that the vessel was still fully loaded on a falling tide and would be aground before this time.

The berth has a minimum depth of water around 3.6m and at a draft of 6.1m. At 1930 the vessel started to list to port. However, as the vessel was bunkering, the list was mistakenly believed to be caused by the port bunker tank being larger than the starboard, and the starboard ballast tank was filled to try and bring the vessel upright.

The vessel was fully aground at 2045.

At 2045 the Pilot called the vessel to advise that he was at the berth but couldn't gain access to the jetty due to a locked gate on the jetty walkway. The Master and Pilot were unable to contact a wharf operative to unlock the gate and the Pilot departed the berth to arrange a pilot boat transfer and subsequently arrived onboard at 2130.

At this time, the vessel was aground and re-floated again at 0115.

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

Berth information

- Operators of new third-party wharves should be requested to provide berth soundings and an updated berth contact list in advance of arrival.
- Vessel Masters should update vessel berth information to include new wharves and ensure a berthing and discharge risk assessment is conducted before arrival

Jetty Access arrangements

- Berth operators to ensure visiting vessels are provided with a key for the access gates or other suitable arrangements for when the vessel is alongside out of normal working hours.

LOCATION:	**AGGREGATE DREDGER**	**ALERT STATUS:**	**Normal**
ACTIVITY:	**MARINE OPERATIONS**	**DATE ISSUED:**	**25/02/2021 17:22:08**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**DREDGING**	**INCIDENT No:**	**03588**