

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
 WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: December 30, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable Julius Katz
 Assistant Secretary for Economic
 and Business Affairs
 Department of State
 Washington, D.C. 20520

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-76-25

On 24 September 1974, the SS TRANSHURON was underway in the Arabian Sea when the main propulsion switchboard caught fire and the main control circuits were destroyed. The vessel was left without means of propulsion. After drifting for about 63 hours, the vessel grounded on Kiltan Island on 26 September 1974. The grounding breached the vessel's hull, caused a pollution incident, and resulted in the loss of the vessel.^{1/}

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the loss of power by the SS TRANSHURON which resulted in the grounding of the vessel on Kiltan Island reef.

Contributing to the accident were the rendering inoperative of the vessels' propulsion switchboard by a fire, caused by the failure of the iron pipe nipple in the bronze condenser head, the reluctance of the master of the SS TRANSHURON to accept offers of aid from other vessels, and his failure to use available information in order to anchor prior to the grounding of the vessel on Kiltan Island.

During the period the TRANSHURON was adrift and without propulsion, a period of approximately 63 hours, the master refused offers of aid and did not ask for immediate assistance from vessels in the area until grounding probability was established by visual bearings. The Safety Board believes that his reluctance to accept assistance may have been motivated by his desire to avoid high salvage claims not inherent in a company negotiated salvage contract with salvage tugs.

Examination of salvage law and custom revealed no basis for such a long delay. The peril of the vessel was established with the loss of propulsion. Waiting until an extremis situation developed was not in

^{1/} For more detailed information on this accident, read "Marine Casualty Report, SS TRANSHURON Fire on 24 September 1974, Arabian Sea," USCG/NTSB-MAR-76-2.

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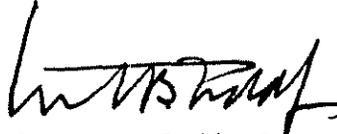
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the best interest of the vessel, its crew, or its cargo. The Safety Board considers that an effort has to be made to reaffirm the master's responsibility to summon aid and that owners or their representatives must allow the master to determine when aid should be summoned. With this determination, the master must be free to call for help.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Office of Maritime Affairs, Department of State:

Introduce before IMCO a suitable resolution to reaffirm that masters are responsible to call assistance based upon the immediate casualty situation and are not to depend solely on company arrangements or assume responsibility for potential salvage claims. (Class II -- Priority Followup) (M-76-25)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. HOGUE, Member, did not participate.



By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.