



U.S. COAST GUARD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Matter under investigation: ROYAL ENGINEER, Allision

Interview of: Hunter P. Hames, Mate

Date/Time: 04JAN24 / 1900

Location: Onboard T/V ROYAL ENGINEER

Interviewed by: [REDACTED]

Others Present: Ryan Gilsenan

On January 4th, 2024, at approximately 1900 I interview Hunter P. Hames, the on-watch mate aboard the Towing Vessel ROYAL ENGINEER (ON # 501746), following the allision with the North Charleston Terminal cargo crane H-39-037. Mr. Hames was working on the ROYAL ENGINEER as a mate; however, he currently holds an endorsement for towing vessel master as of May 08th, 2023. Mr. Hunter stated that he has made several trips on the Cooper River pushing the crane barge known as STEVENS 1471(ON # 1306872).

On January 4th, 2024, at approximately 1130 Mr. Hames stated he assumed watch with his deckhand Malik Da'Quan Deas and relieved the vessels master Mr. John C. Skinner Jr. The vessel was located up the Cooper River at NEXANS facility to move the barge STEVENS 1471 to pier K at Stevens shipyard on the Cooper River. At approximately 1450 the vessel began its voyage down the Cooper River pushing the barge with the crane boom down facing the towing vessel. Mr. Hames stated he attempted to contact the Dredge BRUNSWICK to make passing arrangements, however he was unable to establish communications over the radio. At approximately 1605 Mr. Hames stated he now had a visual of the dredge BRUNSWICK and was able to successfully establish communication. The dredge was spud down near the vessel CELSIUS NICOSIA (IMO # 9330496) conducting dredging operations in the Cooper River and pivoted the vessel into the river to create more room for the tug and barge to pass. The dredge leverman passed on the radio that the towing vessel would have approximately 300ft of clearance between the CELSIUS NICOSIA and the dredge BRUNSWICK. At this point Mr. Hames stated his deckhand Mr. Deas was posted on the bow of the barge with a radio communicating to him the vessels clearance. Mr. Hames stated he proceeded down river between the two vessels at approximately 1-2kts. During the voyage Mr. Hames said he could not see the top of the barge crane from inside the bridge and had to step outside the wheelhouse in order to see the top. As the towing vessel made its approach Mr. Hames stated the deckhand said it looked like they have enough clearance to get under the terminal cargo crane. At approximately 1625 the STEVENS 147 crane allided with the North Charleston Terminal cargo crane H-39-037, causing damage to both cranes. Mr. Hames stated he then put the towing vessel in reverse and had the dredge BRUNSWICK break the dredge line and move its position to continue the voyage back to Pier K.

Additionally, I asked Mr. Hames what the height of the crane on the STEVENS 1471 was, which he didn't know. I then asked how he knew he would fit under the Don Holt bridge, which he stated the crew at NEXANS said he was fine. I again asked if he knew what an air gap sensor was, which he replied no. Additionally, Mr. Hames wasn't aware of the local notice to mariners identifying the dredging operations.

[REDACTED]