

5 SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Finferries' management system and customer service

Finferries' management system leaves many things at the discretion of the ships' masters and ferry captains, which increases the significance of human factors and the possibility of dangerous navigation errors. The company's safety management system does not provide sufficient support for operative decisions-making, nor does it identify all risks related to the operating environment, vessel and its safe navigation, such as the fact that customers can freely call the ship's master.

The Safety Investigation Authority recommends that

Finferries clarify its instructions on at least departure, telephone use and keeping a lookout, and develops its safety management and training system to better address both ship- and ferry-specific and human risks and their management. [2020-S36]

Finferries' vessels operate on several shipping routes used by commercial vessels and encounter larger vessels thousands of times each year. The shipping company's significance to the safety of navigation is thus greater than its size would imply. The company's customer service model would also benefit from a critical review. Customer service calls made to the officer of the watch may not jeopardize the vessel's safe navigation.

5.2 Safety cooperation concerning the use of shipping routes

Encounters between line ferries, road ferries and commuter ferries occur constantly on the Naantali route. No clear regulations have been issued on such encounters, nor have the authorities paid sufficient attention to the risks arising from them. In Sweden, the Sjöfartsverket navigation safety authority and pilots organize an annual route meeting between the users of the Stockholm shipping route to discuss safety and other issues that have arisen during the past year.

The Safety Investigation Authority recommends that

The Finnish Shipowner's Association, together with the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom, Finnpiilot Pilotage Ltd and VTS Finland, develop the safety cooperation between lane users, lane managers and traffic control operators, along with the open sharing of information, for example with regular route meetings as is the practice in Sweden. [2020-S37]

The cooperation model must enable confidential communications between shipping companies and the consequent exchange of information with the authorities.

5.3 Development of the Vessel Traffic Service

The core mission of the Vessel Traffic Service, in other words VTS operations, is to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic. However, the VTS does not monitor or control the passage of road or commuter ferries, nor does it take the risks posed by, for example traffic

volumes or vessels operated by a single crew member into account in its risk assessments. The operative models of VTS have in Finland remained essentially unchanged for its entire existence. During this time, VTS centers have been merged and the amount and complexity of technology used in them has increased. There have also been considerable advances in ships' navigating systems.

The Safety Investigation Authority recommends that

VTS Finland develop its operating models, vessel traffic risk assessments and information systems so that vessel traffic controllers will have a real chance to detect imminent congestion or risks and take preemptive action to warn all traffic under their responsibility. [2020-S38]

5.4 Traffic reports concerning the departure of road ferries

The VTS's charter exempted road and commuter ferries in the Archipelago Sea east of Kihti from making traffic reports when visibility is more than one nautical mile. Reports are always required west of Kihti.

The Safety Investigation Authority recommends that

VTS Finland develop the traffic report practices for road and commuter ferries in cooperation with Traficom, so that the reports as a whole will provide the greatest possible safety benefit and will not be strictly coupled to poor visibility. [2020-S39]

The purpose of traffic reports is not to increase routine radio traffic, but to improve the situational awareness of officers of the watch and the VTS's vessel controllers. The Safety Investigation Authority issued a recommendation (C7/2005 M) on the same matter in an earlier investigation, presenting one option for resolving this issue.

5.5 Improving the bridge ergonomics of older vessels

It is a matter of common knowledge in the seafaring industry that old vessels can have poor bridge ergonomics. Furthermore, the ships' structures and limited sightlines can create significant blind spots. The matter has been addressed in several accident investigations in the past, and a recommendation on it was issued in the investigation concerning the grounding of M/s Skarven west of Degerby on 12 April 2019 (M2019-01). The Safety Investigation Authority thus reiterates recommendation 2020-S13 to ensure that the above listed issues are addressed in inspections. The Safety Investigation Authority recommended that:

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency provide instructions for the assessment of the functionality of the bridge ergonomics of vessels and the usability of the equipment during vessel surveys.

5.6 Measures that have been taken

Finlines and Finferries have arranged a cooperation meeting as a result of the incident and agreed on measures designed to prevent such near misses in the future. The measures include exchanging schedules and contact information for emergencies, along with emphasizing the

need for early communication. Both companies also agreed on utilizing the lessons learned from the incident in their training.

Finnlines has changed the Finnswan's route plan, adding mentions of eight regular or occasional intersections with road or commuter ferries to the plan's written part. The incident has been discussed on the company's vessels and bridge staff have been trained to identify risks better.

As Finnlines has improved its operations on its own volition, the Safety Investigation Authority will not make a specific recommendation to the shipping company.