

General Cargo Ship Splendor Taipei Major Marine Occurrence

Executive Summary

On 10 November 2020, the general cargo ship Splendor Taipei, owned by Rosy Shipping Corporation, with a gross tonnage of 7,506, IMO No. 9377729, and port of registry at Monrovia, berthed at Berth 99 of Port of Taichung at 0016 to load steel products. At approximately 1954, Splendor Taipei departed for the Port of Kaohsiung. At approximately 2036:35, after the pilot had disembarked from the ship, the master ordered “port 20.” At 2040, the ship struck the inner side of the South Outer Breakwater of the Port of Taichung and subsequently grounded. As a result, Splendor Taipei sustained damage to the bow, and the concrete structure of the impacted section of the South Outer Breakwater was displaced. No injuries or environmental pollution were reported.

In accordance with the Transportation Occurrence Investigation Act, Taiwan, and the definition of major transportation occurrences specified therein, the Taiwan Transportation Safety Board was the independent agency in charge of investigating the marine accident. The organizations and agencies invited to participate in the investigation included the Maritime and Port Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Taiwan International Ports Corporation, Ltd., Yi Tai Enterprise Co., Ltd., Taichung Harbor Pilot Office and Liberia Maritime Authority.

After comprehensive investigation and analysis of the factual data, a total of 6 findings and 2 safety recommendations were obtained.

The findings related to probable causes are as follows:

1. During Splendor Taipei’s outbound transit through the main fairway

between the inner and outer breakwaters of the Port of Taichung, the master gave an incorrect helm order, causing the ship to alter course to port and subsequently strike the South Outer Breakwater, resulting in the grounding.

2. The master of Splendor Taipei did not effectively utilize Bridge Resource Management (BRM). Before the third officer returned from escorting the pilot off the bridge, the master did not request the second officer, who had already been released from stern station duties, to rejoin the bridge team. As a result, when the master gave the incorrect port helm order, no other watchkeeping officer was available to assist in verifying the helm command.

The findings related to risk are as follows:

1. Prior to this occurrence, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications had not established unified regulations governing pilotage areas and pilot boarding/disembarkation positions for international commercial ports in Taiwan.
2. When the pilot disembarked after guiding Splendor Taipei past the inner breakwater of the Port of Taichung, the ship was positioned slightly to the port (south) side of the centerline of the main fairway. Had the pilot maneuvered the ship back to the center of the fairway before disembarkation, the master's navigational workload during nighttime navigation could have been reduced, thereby lowering the risk of contact with the breakwater during departure.
3. The Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Operator Manual of the Port of Taichung did not contain procedures or guidance related to ship traffic monitoring, information service, navigational assistance service, or traffic organization service.

4. The master may have been experiencing fatigue at the time of the occurrence; however, it could not be confirmed that fatigue directly caused the incorrect helm order.

The other findings are as follows:

1. At the time of the occurrence, the VTS of the Port of Taichung responded immediately based on the ship's movement and situation, and repeatedly called Splendor Taipei five times. However, the occurrence involving contact with the South Outer Breakwater could not be prevented.
2. The officer of the watch on board Splendor Taipei did not preserve backup data from the Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) for investigation purposes at the time of the occurrence, and investigators were unable to contact the ship's crew in time to secure the VDR data backup.

Safety Recommendations

To Hinase Ship Management

1. Strengthen masters' professional competency and enhance Bridge Resource Management (BRM) capability to ensure the effective utilization of bridge personnel during ship arrival, departure, and navigation operations.
2. Strengthen guidance to masters under its management that, following a marine occurrence, Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) data from the occurrence ship shall be preserved immediately.

Note: The final report of this occurrence investigation is published in Chinese. To facilitate understanding for non-Chinese readers, the Executive Summary has been translated into English. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, discrepancies may occur. In the event of any inconsistency, the Chinese version shall prevail.