

Freighter crashes into dock

Ship misses U-turn, takes out part of port

By DAVID POSTMAN
Daily News reporter

A heavily loaded cargo ship slammed into a terminal at the Port of Anchorage early Sunday ripping a 30-foot hole in its bow and destroying a portion of the dock.

No one was injured in the accident and Coast Guard officials said no fuel was leaking from the Totem Ocean Trailer Express Inc. vessel, Great Land.

But extensive damage to the 800-foot-long ship's bow and bulkhead must be temporarily patched before the Coast Guard will allow it to leave Anchorage for major repairs, said Jim Duff, Coast Guard duty officer in Anchorage.

And port officials said the damaged dock will not be used until a full inspection is done later this week.

The Great Land was docking at Terminal 3, the port's northernmost terminal, at 1:10 a.m. Sunday when the accident occurred, said Tyler Jones, director of the Port of Anchorage.

The ship was attempting to make a U-turn in Cook Inlet to bring its port side up to the dock — the normal procedure for docking at Terminal 3, Jones said.

But Dave Zimmerman, a longshoreman who watched the accident from a port crane, said the vessel's approach was wrong.

"You're supposed to come on the far side of the Inlet because you need to make that great big U-turn," he said.

But the Great Land came between a barge offshore and the dock and did not appear to have enough room to execute the turn, Zimmerman said.

"Last time I looked he had made a turn to the dock and there was no way out." The ship hit the dock nearly head-on and slid down about 10 feet along the terminal before stopping, he said.

"There was no noise to it. But I was anticipating a jolt and I felt a real nice vibration."

Longshoreman Stan Porhola also watched the ship's approach from farther down the terminal. "When it came into view there was



Anchorage Daily News/Bill Roth

The tugboat Pacific Wind docks the cargo ship Great Land after it rammed a terminal at the Port of Anchorage on Sunday.

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GREAT LAND TO SAIL APRIL 4 AFTER REPAIRS



A tug turned GREAT LAND in Tacoma last week, after she had steamed back under her own power after colliding with a dock at the Port of Anchorage March 17.

SEATTLE, WA — GREAT LAND is expected to sail for Anchorage again April 4, after damage to her bow from colliding with the pier at the Port of Anchorage March 17 is repaired.

GREAT LAND has missed one trip to Alaska while being repaired in dry dock at Todd Shipyard in Seattle. Totem Ocean Express' (TOTE) other ship, WESTWARD VENTURE, sailed her normal schedule, according to Leonard Bickmore, TOTE's port engineer.

Repairs to GREAT LAND included replacing hull plate and part of her collision bulkhead on the port side which was damaged in the collision, Bickmore said. He did not know what the cost would be.

Meanwhile negotiations are underway to pay the bill for repairing the damaged Port of Anchorage dock. The work is

expected to cost about \$1.4 million, according to preliminary estimates from engineer Tetsu Yasuda of TAMS Engineering in Seattle, which does consulting work for the port.

Eleven steel-cased concrete pilings under the dock were shattered by GREAT LAND's bulbous bow, while about 23 feet of the concrete

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deck was fractured, said Jack Brown, Port of Anchorage operations manager. The outside rail for the pier's container cranes was knocked out, as were some tracks used by freight trains on the pier, and their concrete supports.

Nobody was injured.

The Coast Guard is investigating the accident, and a report is expected in several weeks, Brown said. He estimated little economic loss for the port because of the accident, because the section damaged is where GREAT LAND normally docks, and her roll-on roll-off system doesn't require cranes. TOTE has accepted liability, Brown said.

Bickmore said GREAT LAND was caught in an unusual current which was flowing in one direction at her bow and the other at her stern. Her skipper, forced to choose, elected to ram the dock rather than a nearby Sea-Land container ship, he said.

Brown said the collision was the worst collision at the port since a tanker hit the dock in 1965.

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no doubt about it, it was going to hit."

The bow of the ship was split open and its thick steel peeled back when the close to 20,000-ton vessel rammed the terminal.

The dock's surface was torn up and pilings broken before the ship came to a rest.

"I fully expected it to go halfway or all the way through the dock," Zimmerman said, adding, "It was real impressive."

Jones would not speculate on the cause of the accident. "Right now I'm not concerned about what happened. But we want to fix it and take procedures as a port to make sure it doesn't happen again," he said.

The bottom portion of the bow probably knocked out structural steel pilings under the dock, Jones said. But details on the extent of the damage won't be known until later this week.

TOTE officials were not available for comment Sunday.

With the help of two tugboats and an incoming tide, the ship broke free of the dock at about 3 a.m., Jones said.

The Great Land then anchored offshore until Sunday afternoon when a tug helped it dock at Terminal 1, at the southern end of the port.

When the huge ship was tied up, Jones, his boss Gordon Zerbetz, executive manager of the city's Public Utilities, longshoremen and others crowded the dock to get a close-up view of the damage.

"That's the Port of Anchorage," Jones said pointing to the cement and steel hanging out of the massive gash.

Damaged steel was evident as far back as 50 feet from the tip of the bow. A bulkhead visible through the torn hull also sustained damage.

Immediately after the accident, three Coast Guard officials were on the scene, according to Duff. A marine inspector who checked the ship's seaworthiness told the Great Land's captain that temporary repairs must be made to the hull before the vessel can return to Seattle for permanent repairs, Duff said.

A port safety officer checked the ship for any leaking fuel or other pollutants. None were found.

Another Coast Guard official did a preliminary investigation into the cause of the wreck, interviewing the captain and other crew members. A full report will not be completed for several weeks.

On Oct. 16 1983 another TOTE vessel, the Westward, rammed the dock just north of the site of Sunday's accident, Jones said.

The Westward was attempting the same U-turn when it slammed into the terminal. A sudden change in the tides and winds were found to be the cause of the accident, the port director said.

Port and Coast Guard officials could not say if there had been a similar change Sunday morning.

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