



INTERIM REPORT

Art. 16.2 Law 4033/2011 (art. 14.2 Directive 2009/18/EC)

MARINE CASUALTY SAFETY INVESTIGATION

Foundering of Tug POTHITOS III

**Marine casualty
Safety Investigation
Law 4033/2011 as amended and
applies**

(summary extract of art. 1.b, 4.1.a
& 4.1.b)

The conduct of Safety Investigations into marine casualties or incidents is independent from criminal, discipline, administrative or civil proceedings whose purpose is to apportion blame or determine liability. The sole objective of the conduct of a safety investigation is to ascertain the circumstances that caused the marine accident or incident through analysis, to draw useful conclusions and lessons learned that may lead, if necessary, to safety recommendations or proposals addressed to parties or stakeholders involved in order to take remedial actions, aiming to prevent or avoid future marine accidents.

Points of Interest

- This Interim Report has been prepared by virtue of art. 16.2 Law 4033/2011, as applies (art. 14.2 Directive 2009/18/EC) as the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the marine accident date.
- The Interim Report has been published for the sole purposes of the safety investigation process with no litigation in mind and should be inadmissible to any judicial or other proceedings (administrative, disciplinary, criminal or civil) whose purpose is to attribute or apportion blame or liability.
- The Interim Report only aims to present a concise summary of the events occurred on the 21 of October 2022 that led to the "very serious marine casualty".
- The Interim Report does not constitute legal advice in any way and should not be construed as such.

Very Serious Marine Casualty

HBMCI conducts the safety investigation of issued marine casualty as the Lead Investigating State in cooperation with the respective Authority of Malta, MSIU

The content of this Interim Report is based on current available information and data collected and analyzed during the safety investigation process into captioned marine casualty.

The completion of the procedure as defined in relevant legislation may reveal or identify new information, data or evidence and consequently cause changes or amendments in data provided by this Interim Report.

All times quoted are Local Times (UTC +3).

October 2022

POTHITOS III

Tug POTHITOS III had been stationed at the port of Patmos from 25 June 2022 until 24 July 2022, 31 July 2022 until 14 September 2022 and from 07 October 2022 until the day of the casualty. While in Patmos she was operating as a port tug, providing assistance mostly to the cruise vessels calling at Patmos port. She was manned with three crew members, that is the Skipper, one AB and one Engineer who had joined the tug's crew on the same day of the casualty.

AZAMARA JOURNEY

At the time of the casualty AZAMARA JOURNEY was conducting a ten days cruise in the Aegean Sea. Her itinerary provided passenger embarkation at Piraeus Port on 18 October 2022, intermediate destinations in Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Santorini, Agios Nikolaos, Chania, Nafplion and return to Piraeus for disembarkation on 27 October. AZAMARA JOURNEY arrived at Patmos morning hours on 21 October 2023 and with the assistance of tug POTHITOS III she berthed at Patmos Port at approximately 07:50. She was scheduled for departure at 22:00 on the same day.

The marine casualty

Following the completion of passenger embarkation, the crew of AZAMARA JOURNEY started preparations for the departure. At 21:03:30 a briefing meeting was held on the bridge, where the Master explained the intended maneuver to the involved crew, assigned specific tasks and provided instructions to the crew members for the safe execution of the operation. The bridge team was consisted by the Master who would have the con, the Staff Captain who was assigned with the communication with the mooring stations and with the tug if deemed necessary, the OOW, one AB and one Cadet. In the fore mooring station the Safety Officer was in charge, assisted by the Bosun and at the aft mooring station the 3rd Officer was in charge. POTHITOS III was berthed in Patmos port and at approximately 09:08:36 sailed in order to provide assistance for the departure of AZAMARA JOURNEY. On board the tug was only the Skipper and the Engineer and not the AB. Moreover, not all watertight deck openings were closed and secured.

After sailing from the berthing position, POTHITOS III headed to AZAMARA JOURNEY's bow and at approximately 21:21:30 took a mooring line which was lowered from the vessel's fore Panama chock. The line was pulled on the deck by the engineer and following the instructions of the Skipper it was secured on the bitt and not on the hook which was equipped with a "quick release" mechanism. Following that, the tug proceeded away from the vessel's bow and when it reached a satisfactory distance the Skipper informed the Master through VHF and AZAMARA JOURNEY's crew secured the line on the vessel's forward bitt. The length of the mooring line was estimated at approximately 23m. After securing the line, the tug remained at the Port Side of AZAMARA JOURNEY, approximately at an angle of 100° from her bow, waiting for orders, while the crew of AZAMARA JOURNEY proceeded to heave up the mooring lines.

At 21:23:24 the Master called the Skipper to check the readiness of the tug. The Skipper replied that the tug is ready and the Master told him that he will inform him when to start to pull. At approximately 21:32:00, all mooring lines were casted off and the Master started the maneuver to move the vessel away from the dock using the two bow thrusters and the M/Es (Port M/E AHEAD, STRBD M/E ASTERN and the two rudders at an inward position). At 21:32:33 and as the Master was performing the maneuver, the Skipper called on the VHF and asked if the tug was needed to start pulling. The Master replied negatively. At 21:33:34 the stern of the vessel started closing towards the dock and shortly after, at 21:33:57, the Master put also the STRBD M/E to AHEAD. Then, at 21:34:10 the Master called the tug on the VHF requesting to start to pull but this call was made in the English language and not in Greek, as were their previous communications. At that time the mooring line of the tug was in tension; however, it is suggested that the order from the Master to start pulling was not received by the Skipper, because at 21:34:18 the mooring line of the tug started to become slack. In the meantime, the stern of the vessel kept closing and at 21:34:30 it contacted with the dock. At that time the vessel's SOG was recorded to 1 Knot and POTHITOS III was not pulling, as the mooring line was slack onto the sea water level.

As the vessel kept moving forward increasing her speed to 2 Knots, the mooring line tensioned and started pulling the tug closer to the vessel. The Skipper started maneuvering to avoid the dangerous situation; however his attempts were unsuccessful and the tug kept approaching the vessel until it hit her, at 21:35:34 and then started listing to STBD. At that time, AZAMARA JOURNEY's SOG was recorded at 4 Knots. At 21:35:55, the Master requested again from the tug to continue pulling but only indistinct voice was heard from POTHITOS III on the VHF. The Staff Captain asked the OOW to check on the tug and the Master asked the tug through the VHF if everything was OK, without any response. At that time, the tug had listed almost 90° and the vessel's SOG was recorded at 5 Knots. The vessel kept dragging the listed tug and the mooring line broke at 21:36:34. As a result, the tug turned almost immediately vertically, with only the fore part remaining above the sea water level and shortly after, at 21:37:11 it was completely sank. The engineer who had exited the bridge and was at the fore deck fell into the sea and managed to get on a small rib that was released when the tug sank. AZAMARA JOURNEY's crew immediately threw 3 MOB life rings and sounded the "OSCAR" alarm which stands for Man Over Board situation response. The vessel proceeded to a safe area outside of Patmos port and launched the Fast Rescue Boat which recovered the engineer from the rib. The Skipper had not been able to abandon the vessel and he was later recovered from the sunken tug by divers. POTHITOS III was recovered on 14-12-2022.

Investigation

The safety investigation and analysis conducted has highlighted several contributing and underlined factors that led to the sinking of the tug. Such factors include in random order: proper communication, tug specifications, tug manning levels, securing the watertight openings prior to operation, not engaging the hook with the "quick release mechanism" and others as they will be listed in the Final Report.

Final safety Investigation Report

The analysis of the casualty is still ongoing and when the draft safety investigation report is finalized will be circulated to the involved and interested parties for consultation. The final safety investigation report will subsequently be issued following the consultation period.



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FACTUAL INFORMATION

Vessels' Particulars

Name	POTHITOS III	AZAMARA JOURNEY
Flag	Greece	Malta
Port of Registry	Piraeus	Valletta
Ship type	Tug	Passenger (Cruise vessel)
IMO	9248617	9200940
Call sign	SVB2627	9HOB8
LOA (m)	16,89	180.45
Breath (m)	5,29	25.46
Year of built	2002	1999
Shipyard	Gorinchem, Netherlands	Chantiers de l'Atlantique, Saint Nazaire, France
Construction material	Steel	Steel
Gross Tonnage	50	30277
Net Tonnage	15	11748
Engine / Power /Speed Tug Bollard Pull	2 X Caterpillar / 350 kw 15 Tons	4 X Wartsila/4860kW + 2 Propulsion Motors, CEG Alstom Moteurs / 13500 kw, combined / 18 Knots
Classification Society	—	DNV
Minimum Safe Manning	03	20

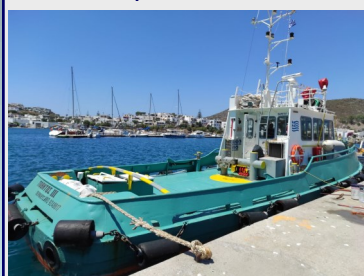
Voyage Particulars

Date of departure	30/6/2014	21/10/2022
Trading Area	Mediterranean and Black Sea, A1	International
Crew on board	02	393
Passengers on board	—	593

Marine Casualty Information

Date & time	21 October 2022, 21:37 Local Time	
Type of marine casualty	Very serious marine casualty	
Weather & environmental conditions	Wind North 5-6 Bf/ Sea state smooth/ Good visibility/Night	
Location of casualty	37° 19' 347'' N / 26° 32' 959'' E, Port of Patmos Island, Greece	
Damages to ship	Foundering	Minor deformations and scratches
Fatalities / injuries	01	None

POTHITOS III / AZAMARA JOURNEY



Depiction of ECDIS at 21:30:54

