



**BOARD OF PILOT COMMISSIONERS FOR THE  
BAYS OF  
SAN FRANCISCO, SAN PABLO, AND SUISUN**

**INCIDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE  
INVESTIGATION REPORT**

**REPORT ON THE ALLISION OF THE BULK CARRIER M/V NEW HANDY  
WITH SAN JOAQUIN RIVER NAVIGATION MARKER #39 ON JULY 23, 2023.  
PILOT: CAPTAIN RAYMOND RIDENS**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. On the morning of July 23, 2023, the bulk carrier M/V NEW HANDY (hereinafter NEW HANDY) arrived in San Francisco Bay. Captain Ray Ridens was assigned to pilot the ship from the central bay to Stockton, CA.
2. The NEW HANDY is a bulk carrier with a length of 600 feet and a beam of 105 feet. The ship was on a nearly even keel, with drafts of 27 feet 01 inches forward and 28 feet 01 inches aft.
3. Captain Ridens boarded the NEW HANDY off Alcatraz Island at 0145 hours. On the navigation bridge with Captain Ridens was the ship captain, watch officer, and helmsman.
4. Captain Ridens stated that the transit was normal, and the ship was directionally stable.
5. At approximately 0645 hours, the ship rounded Oulton Point (on the San Joaquin River) and Captain Ridens had the helmsman steady up on course 015 degrees, just prior to starting a long 50-degree bend to starboard.
6. Captain Ridens stated that he typically makes this turn with either successive five-degree course changes or on continuous helm order. On this day, he stated he initiated the turn with a ten-degree helm order and then ordered the helm amidships. He recalled that he allowed the ship to swing slowly to starboard and when passing 025 degrees, he gave the order to 035 degrees. The quartermaster repeated the command and began adding counter-rudder to slow the swing.
7. Captain Ridens recalled that the ship was in a good position, and everything seemed to be in good order, when he looked away for a moment, and when he looked back he realized that the swing had stalled. To correct, he ordered 20-degrees right rudder to quickly increase the rate of turn. At this point, the ship speed over ground was 11-knots, aided by a one-knot following current. The increased rate of turn drove the port quarter of the ship down on to Light #39. Captain Ridens stated that he held the rudder over to develop positive angle away from the shallow area to port.
8. The port quarter of the ship came in contact with the cage of the light and scrapped down the hull. The light appeared to be in position but leaning slightly, and the cage appeared to be askew. As it was daylight when they passed the light, it was unclear if it was working properly. Captain Ridens stated the light appeared to be in its proper position before and after the contact.
9. Captain Ridens observed that, other than scrapped paint on the ship, there was no other obvious signs of contact.
10. Captain Ridens reported the contact to Vessel Traffic System (VTS), once the ship was steady, followed by a call to the San Francisco Bar Pilots Port Agent. The remainder of the transit was uneventful, and the ship was secured in Berth 5, Port of Stockton at 1030 hours.

**11. Abbreviations in the report refer to the following:**

- I. **IRC** – Incident Review Committee
- II. **SFBP** – San Francisco Bar Pilots
- III. **FOIA** – Freedom of Information Act
- IV. **USCG** – United States Coast Guard
- V. **VTS** – Vessel Traffic Service

**II. FINDINGS OF FACTS**

**1. Vessel Identification and Description**

M/V NEW HANDY is a Bulk Carrier registered in Liberia. She was built in 2021.

Vessel Particulars:

- Length: 600 feet    Beam: 105 feet
- Actual Draft: 28 feet 01 inches aft (deep draft)
- Tonnage: 25,756 gross tons
- Propulsion: Diesel Engine
- Owner: Hsin Chien Marine, Taipei, Taiwan



**2. Date, time and location of event**

Date and Time: July 23, 2023, approximately 0650 hours

**IRC Report on M/V NEW HANDY**

Location: In the vicinity of San Joaquin Navigation Marker #39

### 3. Identification of Pilot

San Francisco Bar Pilot: Captain Raymond Ridens

### 4. Weather and Sea Conditions

#### A. Weather Conditions

The weather conditions on the river on the day of the transit were as follows:

Wind:	light
Visibility:	unlimited

#### B. Tidal Information

Calculated under keel clearance at Three Mile Slough entrance, San Joaquin River:

- Controlling depth = 55' 00"
- Height of tide at 0650 = + 2' 04"
- Depth at 0650 = 57' 04"
- Deep Draft 28'01"
- UKC at the time (0650) 29'03"

### 5. Statement of the Pilot

- A. Captain Ridens stated he boarded the ship in the central bay, near Alcatraz Island, at 0145 hours on July 23, 2024.
- B. He reported the ship in good order, with the Captain, Mate, and Quartermaster on the bridge at all times during the passage. He did not perceive any communication issues related to the normal operation of route piloting, and all helm orders were answered and repeated.
- C. He stated that they had a normal transit, with the vessel responding to the rudder as one would expect when loaded in this condition, and he found her directionally stable.
- D. At approximately 0645 they rounded Oulton Point (on the San Joaquin River) and steadied up on a course of 015 degrees temporarily, anticipating the start of a long 50 degree turn to starboard.
- E. Captain Ridens noted that he normally makes this turn with continuous conning, either by successive five-degree course changes or continuous helm orders. On this morning he initiated the turn with a 10-degree helm order and then a midship command. He let the ship swing slowly to starboard and as it slowly increased the rate of turn and passed a heading of 025 degrees, he gave a heading order of 035 degrees. The quartermaster replied and began to slow the swing with an appropriate amount of counter-rudder.
- F. With the ship in a good position and with everything seemingly in good order, he looked down for a moment and when he looked up, he realized that we had lost our swing rate. He ordered the helm starboard 20 degrees to quickly increase the rate of turn. The increased rate of turn drove

the port quarter of the ship down on to Light #39 and he held the rudder to develop a positive angle away from the shallow area to port.

- G. He noted that the port quarter of the ship came in contact with the cage of the light and scraped down the hull. The light appeared to be in position, leaning slightly, and the cage appeared to be askew. As it was daylight when he approached and passed the light, he assumed it was working properly and it appeared to be in its proper position before and after he contact.
- H. Further observations were that other than scraped paint on the hull of the ship, there were no other obvious signs of contact, and all mechanical systems were working properly.
- I. As soon as the ship was on a steady course, he made a phone call to Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) to make a report and following that he contacted the Port Agent. The Port Agent arranged for chemical and alcohol testing to be performed at the destination in Stockton when the ship arrived.
- J. The remainder of the transit went as intended and the ship was secured to Berth 5, Port of Stockton at 1030 hours.

#### **6. Names of Witnesses**

The written statements of witnesses included are as follows:

Captain Raymond Ridens, pilot of the NEW HANDY

#### **7. Estimate of Damages**

A verbal estimate provided by the USCG of the cost to renew Navigation Marker #39 was \$80,000.

#### **8. Nature and Extent of Injuries**

None.

#### **9. Relevant Records from U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)**

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request was submitted to the USCG on August 1, 2023.

A response to the FOIA was received on September 9, 2023, and included the following documents:

1. Report of Marine Casualty (Form CG-2692), July 25, 2020; 5 pages.
2. Involved Persons and Witnesses Addendum (Form CG-2692D); 2 pages
3. MISLE Case ID 1361167 Report, July 25, 2023; 17 pages.
4. Pilot Statement Email (MS Outlook) Printout, Subject: Re: NEW HANDY/SJ Light #39 Allision; 2 pages.
5. ATON Repair Cost Email (MS Outlook) Printout, Subject: RE: SEC SF - MS
6. -VSL NEW HANDY ALLISION W/ ATON - SAN JOAQUIN RVR LT 39, August 17, 2023; 2 pages.
7. Allision, AIS History Replay Screenshot.

8. Approach with vsl info, AIS History Replay Screenshot.
9. approach, AIS History Replay Screenshot.
10. ATON photo.
11. NEW HANDY AIS with VSL Info, AIS History.
12. San Joaquin Light 39 NOAA; PNG file, 555 KB file size.
13. Vsl Photo.

#### **10. Pilot Licensee Background Information**

- A. Capt. Ridens was first licensed as a pilot on January 1, 2007.
- B. Capt. Ridens has one prior incident:
  - A 2013 vessel interaction event in OOH with gangway damage. No misconduct found.

### **III. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS BY THE IRC**

#### **Analysis**

##### **Jurisdiction**

The Legislature has delegated authority to the Board to establish an incident review committee to review all reports of misconduct or navigational incidents involving pilots or other such matters for which a license issued by the board may be revoked or suspended. The Harbors and Navigation Code §1181 defines misconduct, in part, as (g) negligently, ignorantly, or willfully running a vessel on shore, or otherwise rendering it liable to damage, or otherwise causing injury to persons or damage to property. After reviewing the evidence and ruling out ignorance or willfulness as the cause of any damage in this event, the IRC has limited its analysis and conclusion to a consideration of negligence.

##### **Standard of care**

The standard of care calls for a pilot is to exercise that degree of care and skill possessed by the average pilot. He must exercise the degree of skill commonly possessed by others in the same employment, and although he is not liable for mere errors in judgment, he is liable for damage caused by his failure to exercise the diligence which others similarly situated would ordinarily have exercised. This is a fairly high standard of care one would expect of an expert, such as a pilot.

##### **Factual Analysis**

This incident involves an allision with a navigation marker during a long course change to starboard. The pilot, Captain Ridens, stated that after initiating a turn to starboard and setting a course of 035 degrees, the quartermaster was allowed to utilize counter-rudder to check the swing. This appears to have resulted in the rate of turn reducing more rapidly than expected. According to Captain Ridens, he momentarily turned his attention away after ordering the new course and when he looked up, he realized that the quick reduction in the rate of turn placed the ship in danger of contacting the riverbank to port.

To prevent this from occurring, Captain Ridens immediately ordered twenty degrees right rudder. The ship was proceeding ahead at approximately 11 knots, which would place the pivot point well forward

on the hull. This reinforces the evidence that when the rudder was placed twenty degrees to starboard, the stern swung out to port during the maneuver. Since the vessel was already on the north (or on the outside) of the bend in the river, this position and maneuver caused the stern to go out to the edge of the bank sufficient to make contact with navigation marker #39.

Given this analysis, it appears that both the position of the ship, adjacent to the north bank, and the temporary lapse of attention to the continuity of the rate of turn, contributed to the allision.

The position of the ship on the north side of the bend is consistent with remaining in the deepest part of the river as the ship rounds the bend. While there appears to be adequate depth in this section of the river, the under-keel clearance does diminish on the south or right side of the channel. Thus, the choice to stay north had a basis in safe navigation. The one-knot of flood current would also be the strongest on the outside of the bend and may have contributed to the ship's proximity to the bank.

The reduction of the rate of turn, according to Captain Riden's statement, was due to a momentary distraction of his attention to the rate of turn, coupled with the decision to allow the helmsman to commence steadying up on a course. It appears that this decision resulted in the rate of turn slowing sooner than he had expected. This slow rate of turn placed the ship in danger of making contact with the riverbank to the north, had immediate action not been initiated. When Captain Riden's realized the rate of turn had slowed, he ordered "right twenty (degrees of rudder)". While this action did result in the ship remaining in the channel, it did cause the stern to move north enough to make contact with the navigation marker.

## **Conclusion**

The standard of care is that Captain Riden acts with the same degree of care and skill possessed by the average pilot. He must exercise the degree of skill commonly possessed by others in the same employment, and although he is not liable for mere errors in judgment, he is liable for damage caused by his failure to exercise the diligence which others similarly situated would ordinarily have exercised.

When comparing the actions of Captain Riden to the mythical average pilot, we must consider the working conditions of river transits. These are multi-hour transits of a twisty, narrow, and shallow channels, with complex tidal and river-outflow conditions, making for a very challenging environment that is unforgiving and with little room for error. It is for these reasons that when we compare the actions of a pilot to the standard of another expert similarly situated, we assume that that expert will have the same challenges, which may result in a more liberal standard.

We acknowledge that Capt. Riden is an experienced river pilot having made many transits on this route, all without incident. We also acknowledge the difficulties of river transits and have great appreciation for our pilots who chose to undertake this challenging work. While it might be easy, in hindsight, to say that another pilot in the same circumstances might have not found themselves in the same position, it is equally justifiable to say that the circumstances leading up to the contact were mere errors in judgment. For these reasons, considering Captain Riden's quick actions to mitigate the damage, conclude that it was an error in judgment to both choose to be so far to the north in this turn and to not monitor the rate of turn more closely, that we recommend the Board find Captain Riden not guilty of negligence or misconduct and allow this report to stand as a lesson learned.

#### **IV. IRC RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD**

Based on the above analysis and conclusions the IRC recommends:

1. That the Board find for no misconduct.
2. That the report stands as a lesson learned and close the case with no further action.

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Joanne Hayes White, Chairperson

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Allen Garfinkle, Executive Director

#### **List of Enclosures: (one page unless otherwise noted)**

**Attachment 1 – Preliminary notice by Port Agent**

**Attachment 2 – Chart excerpts of San Joaquin River in vicinity of Nav. Marker #39 (3 pages)**

**Attachment 3 – Email initiating FOIA request**

**Attachment 4 – FOIA response from USCG (minus Pilot Statement), dated 9-29-2023 (37 pages)**

**Attachment 5 – Report by Commission Investigator (9 pages)**

**Attachment 6 – Pilot Statement (confidential) (2 pages)**

**Attachment 7 – Results of Pilot controlled substance testing (confidential)**

#### **ADDENDUM OF CORRECTIONS AND EDITS TO ORIGINAL REPORT**

1. **Page 5, Statement of the Pilot, items K., L., and M. were deleted from the previous version as they were not applicable to this report.**