



Accident Report

Collision
Skookum

2 June 2006



REPORT NO.: 06 4097

VESSEL NAME: *SKOOKUM*

Ship Type:	Commercial Passenger Ro-ro
Certified Operating Limit:	Enclosed Water
Flag:	New Zealand
MSA No.:	132126
Construction Material:	Steel
Length Overall (m):	30
Breadth (m):	10
Gross Tonnage:	66
Light Displacement:	166 tonnes
Draft (m):	1.5
Owner:	Tauranga Barge Company Ltd
SSM Company:	Nortel
Accident Investigator:	Ian Clarke

NARRATIVE

On Friday 2 June at 0500 hours New Zealand Standard Time (NZST), the roll-on roll-off (ro-ro) vehicular carrier **Skookum** left its wharf at Butters Crane Landing, Mt Maunganui, to transport road vehicles to Matakana Island, a distance of about three miles.

Skookum headed north to pass round Sulphur Point, then turned into the Otumoetai Channel and followed the line of beacons. After rounding "W Otumoetai" beacon, it headed north to the wharf at the southern end of Matakana Island.

Skookum arrived at Matakana Island at about 0530 hours, discharged its vehicles and was returning lightship, retracing its outward passage. The weather was fine and clear. It was still dark and there was a lot of background lighting from the commercial wharfs. The Skipper had the door at the forward end of the wheelhouse open to prevent reflection of lights from interfering with his visibility.

It was about one hour before low water and **Skookum** kept to the north of Otumoetai Channel to avoid the sand bank south of "Otumoetai B" beacon. On approaching Sulphur Point, the Skipper kept a careful lookout for traffic heading out of the Waikareao Estuary and Tauranga Marina. He was also watching **Forest Lady**, another ro-ro vehicular carrier, moored alongside the jetty south of "Otumoetai A" beacon. A truck was waiting to be loaded onto **Forest Lady**.

When he looked back from **Forest Lady**, he saw that **Skookum** was closer to "Otumoetai A" beacon than expected. A strong tidal stream was setting the vessel approximately 070°(T), towards the beacon.

The Skipper executed an emergency stop. **Skookum** was fitted with two HRP azimuthal drive units, the forward unit being to starboard of the centreline and the after unit to port. Both engines were running at 1800 rpm to give the ship a speed of 6.5 knots. To stop the vessel, the Skipper turned both units through 180 degrees in a clockwise direction to reverse the thrust. This directed the flow from the starboard unit against the hull, which caused heavy vibration and shook the vessel violently. To stop the vibration, he reduced the speed of the starboard engine. When the unit had been turned so that the flow would be clear of the hull, he increased the throttle setting but nothing happened. He realized that the drive had become disengaged as a result of the engine rpm dropping very quickly. This in turn caused the hydraulic pressure in the clutch system to fall and the drive unit to declutch.

By that time the port unit was providing astern thrust which, with the starboard unit stopped, caused the vessel to turn to port, towards the beacon. **Skookum** was almost stopped when its port shoulder made contact with "Otumoetai A" beacon. The beacon was pushed over to about 45° and, as the vessel backed off, fell over and was submerged.

The Skipper disengaged the clutch to the starboard drive then re-engaged it and the drive unit responded immediately. He remained in the vicinity of the beacon to ensure that there was no floating debris to endanger other craft, then resumed the voyage to Butters Crane Wharf. There was no significant damage to **Skookum**. The Skipper advised Maritime New Zealand, the Safe Ship Management company, the Port of Tauranga Ltd and the Harbourmaster as soon as practicable after the accident.

Skookum was being operated by a Skipper and Deckhand. The Skipper held Certificates as Skipper of a Coastal Fishing Boat and Second Class Diesel Trawler Engineer. He had served at sea for 30 years, mainly in fishing boats. Since joining **Skookum** in November 2005, when it was commissioned, he had worked, on average, five days a week, in a roster with other skippers. He made six to ten round trips each day between Butters Crane Wharf and Matakana Island. On Thursday 1 June, he had finished work at 1300 hours, was in bed before 2200 hours and started again on board **Skookum** at 0430 hours on Friday. This event was the first reportable maritime incident in which he had been involved.

Tides

High Water	2317 hours	1.8 metres
Low Water	0530 hours	0.5 metres

The above times are from the tide tables. The actual times of high and low water varies in different parts of the harbour.



Photograph 1
Skookum

LESSONS

The circumstances surrounding this accident include a combination of the type of drive units, vessel design, a restricted channel, the tidal stream, background lighting and temporary loss of situational awareness.