Shift of Timber Deck Cargo - Lessons Learned

The requirements of the present Code of Safe Practice for Ships Carrying Timber Deck Cargoes* came into effect on 1 January 1992. However, between 2001 and 2002 the Marine Accident Investigation Branch of the UK MCA noted an increase in the frequency of incidents involving timber deck cargoes and a study of the issue was initiated.

On completion of the study of eight individual incidents the MAIB promulgated "Lessons Learned" from each case, from which the following is taken:

- Crew gang on deck in the conditions that would possibly necessitate the need to jettison part or all of a cargo of timber put themselves in danger. Remotely operated jettisoning systems should be considered.
- The list resulting from the shift of a timber cargo stowed on hatch covers could lead to the exposure of fuel tank vent pipes and loss of power from contaminated fuel thus increasing the risk of a vessel foundering.
- Vessels should obtain regular weather forecasts so that if necessary and where possible shelter might be sought in adequate time before an incident develops.
- When stowing a cargo of timber the Code of Practice should be followed along with all available information in the vessel’s Cargo Securing Manual.
- The friction between timber deck cargoes and the hatch covers should be maximised; Steel on steel interfaces should be avoided whereas wood on steel is better. Painting the deck and hatch covers with high friction paint, especially when carrying deck cargoes on a regular basis, is an option to be considered.
- Ensure that lashing arrangements are sufficient to prevent the cargo moving laterally and are strong enough to withstand the various forces generated in rough sea conditions. This is especially important where fabric lashings are utilised.
- The loading of any timber cargo should be well supervised to ensure that the stow is tight. " Lashing gear to be used on ships loading deck cargoes of timber, in particular, chains, need to be in compliance with the requirements of the Code.

The MAIB findings on this issue were reported in the MAIB Safety Digest 3/2005.

* Adopted by IMO Assembly Resolution A.715(17)