

**STWAC Recommendation from the
Captain of the Port (COTP)**



Commander
 U.S. Coast Guard
 Sector/Air Station Corpus Christi
 Valent Hall
 249 Glasson Drive
 Corpus Christi, TX 78408
 Phone: (361) 939-0201

5102
 December 6, 2019

Attn: Mr. Xavier Valverde
 Chairperson, South Texas Waterways Advisory Committee
 P. O. Box 9488
 Corpus Christi, TX 78401

Dear Mr. Valverde:

I am sending this letter to inform you of a marine casualty that occurred in the Corpus Christi Inner Harbor, Corpus Christi, TX and to provide two items my investigators recommend the South Texas Waterways Advisory Committee discuss and implement.

On August 16, 2018, a fully loaded tank barge allided with a moored tank barge while being pushed in a doubled up configuration when transiting outbound in the Corpus Christi Inner Harbor. The outbound towing vessel and barges had slowed to avoid a meeting situation with an inbound tankship when propeller wash from two pushing harbor towing vessels that were mooring another tankship on the South side of channel pushed the outbound towing vessel and its two barges across to the North side of the channel, alliding with a moored barge. The moored barge suffered a hole in its starboard wing void shell plating, 8 feet long by 12 inches wide and 2 to 3 feet above the waterline. The situation also included: vessels moored or in the process of mooring at three consecutive docks on the South side of the channel, barge cleaning operations directly across on the North side of the channel, an outbound towing vessel with doubled-up loaded barges proceeding into a blind bend in a narrow part of the channel with vessel activity and congestion ahead, and an inbound tankship unaware that the outbound towing vessel had two loaded barges.

Improper usage of installed electronic charting systems and failed communications led to a lack of maritime domain awareness on the part of all operators. Had a more formal communication and navigation system or policy been in place monitoring the situation, the towing vessel could have held its position prior to entering the area subject to the propeller wash, allowing the tanker to safely pass before continuing its transit at a safe speed past the mooring operations.


While the Coast Guard has regulatory options to restrict maritime operations, there are also acceptable local level alternatives that can be taken to mitigate these types of incidents from reoccurring. Currently, there are no known formal passing restrictions within the Port of Corpus Christi, with individual companies and the Pilot's Association having their own guidelines for restricted passing areas at a few identified choke points within the port. The specific area of this incident has not been identified by the involved companies as a no passing zone. Additionally, the Port of Corpus Christi Harbormaster's Office does not typically broadcast notification of vessel movements and operations to vessels transiting within the port.

Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures as prudent that would help mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Identify choke points within the Port, to include but not limited to the areas at Avery Point Oil Docks and Kirby Inland Marine and develop internal procedures for passing within these areas.
- Develop a process for communicating situational awareness for vessel movements, including mooring activities.

We are willing to send one of our investigating officers to a meeting to present the incident if requested. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact Commander Jerry Butwid at 361-939-5100.

Sincerely,


 E. J. GAYNOR
 Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
 Captain of the Port of Corpus Christi

Hey

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**

**United States
Coast Guard**



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Sector/Air Station Corpus Christi

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