Marine Safety Forum: Safety Flash15-14

Issued: 27th April 2015
Subject: DP Reference System Transponder Near Miss

Event

A company PSV was working cargo alongside a fixed installation when a high potential near miss occurred with the vessels radius transponder.

Root causes:

Whilst on station alongside in DP the Second Officer witnessed a member of the installations deck crew removing the radius transponder from its position on the rig.

When alerted by the Second Officer, the Master immediately removed the transponder from the DP desk and contacted the installation deck foreman to have the transponder returned to its original position.

Had the Second Officer not sighted the rig crew removing the transponder and the Master not deselected the unit from the DP desk, there was a clear risk for a high potential incident.

Interfering with a transponder has the potential to cause a loss of signal, degradation of the signal quality, degradation of the position accuracy or if operating at an FPSO the system may switch from "follow target" to "fixed position" as has been seen recently in the US Gulf. Each of these poses a risk to the vessel and installation the vessel is working at.

Risk Identification:

A questionnaire on safe operations within the 500m zone identified concerns relating to a general lack of understand of marine operations on installations. That would appear to be the case in this instance.

All vessels utilizing transponders such as this are requested to mark them with a statement such as "do not move without prior permission of the attending vessel", this should be done in a prominent position but not in a way that is detrimental to its effective operation as a position reference system.