



NEWS RELEASE

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MARINE PILOT'S PERSISTENCE AVERTS COLLISION BETWEEN CARGO VESSEL AND FERRY BOAT

SEATTLE – The persistence and quick action of a Puget Sound Pilot played a key role in averting a collision between an Asia-bound container ship and a state ferry boat in Elliott Bay.

As a safety precaution, state law requires that licensed pilots be at the helm of all foreign vessels traveling through Puget Sound waterways. On December 20, 2006, the container ship Knud-Maersk was heading north from Tacoma to the open sea. As it approached Seattle, the Puget Sound Pilot who was navigating the container ship contacted the westbound Bainbridge Island ferry "Wenatchee" to make passing arrangements. When ships cross at a 90 degree angle, one ship slows, and/or turns, to go behind the other. In Puget Sound, because these crossings are common, arrangements are almost always made over the radio. These arrangements are made well in advance because of the limited maneuverability of the large container ships. The Knud Maersk is 1,044 feet long, 141 feet wide and over 81,000 gross tons.

According to the Coast Guard and the pilot on board the container ship:

- When about three miles apart, the pilot called the ferry and originally offered to slow the northbound ship and go astern of the ferry.
- The Chief Mate who was operating the ferry responded that "No, I am going to stop and go astern of you."
- Pilot said ok.
- Ferry did not change the course or speed. With the vessels 2 miles apart, the Pilot saw no course or speed change and called the ferry again and offered to go astern of the ferry.
- The ferry said no, she would stop and go astern of the container ship.
- One minute later, with the ships 1 mile apart, the ferry still had not changed its course. The pilot called yet again and said he was uncomfortable with the situation.
- The ferry asked what the pilot wanted done, and the pilot asked in very direct language that the ferry get out of the way and that the pilot was taking the container ship hard left. Because this move took the container ship into the separation zone between the north and south bound traffic lanes, the pilot was required to and did call the Coast Guard VTS on Channel 14. The pilot informed VTS that he was going into separation zone to go around the Wenatchee. The ferry is now ½ mile away.

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- Pilot called the ferry again and asked if the ferry was backing down. Immediately, the mate on the ferry responded that, yes, the ferry is backing down.
- The ferry eventually got stopped and then started backing and the container ship passed ¼ mile ahead of the ferry and continued northbound.

Coast Guard watch supervisor Tom Dike told reporters, "We watched the situation and it looked like the Wenatchee didn't do what it said it was doing on the radio. That's when we were getting ready to intervene and then the Puget Sound Pilot on the container ship got on the radio and said you need to slow down."

Thanks to his persistence and dedication, the Puget Sound Pilot averted a potentially disastrous collision that could have caused serious injury and environmental damage.