

Casualties: Tanker runs aground in Houston Ship Channel

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Grounded Canadian Arctic cruise ship requires unique salvage operation

A cruise ship ran aground on a rock ledge in the Northwest Passage and remained stuck for two and a half weeks, and experts warn that similar incidents could become more common as Arctic maritime travel increases.

The 331-foot *Clipper Adventurer* struck what was initially described as an uncharted rock Aug. 27, 16 days into a 17-day voyage from Greenland to Nunavut, in northern Canada. The grounding occurred 60 miles from Kugluktuk, Nunavut, at 1910, when seas were calm and skies were clear with no wind. The rock was about 15 feet below the surface.

All 118 passengers remained aboard the cruise ship for two days before being evacuated by the Canadian Coast Guard. Nobody was hurt in the incident, and all passengers and non-essential crew were off the ship by Aug. 30.

Although the rock was initially described as “uncharted” in a news release from cruise ship operator Adventure Canada, the hazard apparently had been cited in a Notice to Shipping published by the Coast Guard.

“What we’ve learned is that the rock was announced in a Notice to Shipping in 2007, but it wasn’t a Notice to Mariners, it was a Notice to Shipping, which is a temporary thing,” said Clayton Anderson, a spokesman for Adventure Canada.

“What we’re trying to get to the bottom of, is ... whether (the

rock) was properly reported” to make it onto the latest maritime charts, he added.

Transport Canada was one of several federal agencies investigating the incident. After finishing its review last month, the agency issued three administrative penalties related to safety of navigation, lifesaving equipment and emergency response against International Shipping Partners, the boat’s owner, said Transport Canada spokeswoman Amber Wonko.

She said each penalty carries a maximum fine of \$25,000.

International Shipping Partners did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Clipper Adventurer remained stranded in Coronation Gulf, between Victoria Island and Nunavut, 18 days before being freed by Resolve Marine Group, a Fort Lauderdale, Fla.- based salvage firm. The ship was refloated Sept. 14.

Resolve President and CEO Joe Farrell said the ship was listing about 5 degrees on the starboard side when salvage crews arrived. Crews determined the ship suffered significant hull damage where it rode onto the rock, but they found it was stable even though several

compartments had taken on water.

Salvage crews spent several days removing weight, including unnecessary personnel, lifeboats and fuel in preparation for refloating. Even with extra weight gone, the boat continued to pound against the



Courtesy: Canadian Coast Guard

The Canadian Coast Guard vessel CCGS *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, in foreground, and tugboats gather around *Clipper Adventurer*, at right, in preparation to refloat the cruise ship. The vessel ran aground on a rock ledge in Coronation Gulf during an Arctic cruise through the Northwest Passage.

rock wall in heavy seas, risking additional damage or even sinking.

Farrell said dive crews placed roller bags under the hull to cushion the boat against the frequent blows. When combined with favorable tides and weather conditions, Farrell said the bags were instrumental in getting the ship refloated.

The roller bags “lifted the ship a bit higher ... and with a high enough swell and the tugs pulling, we were able to pull it off” the rock, Farrell said. The

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use of roller bags to cushion a stranded ship may be a first in the industry, he said.

Farrell said the ship was likely headed to Eastern Europe for extensive repairs.

Maritime experts worry that increased travel in uncharted waters off Nunavut will lead to more groundings, with potentially worse outcomes.

“Canada has the longest coastline of any country in the world, most of it in the Arctic. Until recently, we were able to ignore that coastline because of the thick, hard, ever-present multi-year ice that kept all but the most powerful icebreakers away,” said Michael Byers, a political science professor and Arctic policy expert at the University of British Columbia.

“As a result, our charts are woefully incomplete, our search-and-rescue coverage is poor and we have no ports of refuge,” he continued. “The Canadian government isn’t to blame for the situation, but it does bear the responsibility — as a sovereign state — to provide these basic services within its coastal waters now.”

John Hughes Clarke, professor of ocean mapping at the University of New Brunswick, agrees there are potential issues with future transport in the Arctic.

“From our end, we’re hoping that this acts as a catalyst to undertake more surveys,” he said.

Adventure Canada said it expects to have the ship back in service sometime in 2011.

Casey Conley