

Frighter Drifts Into Marina

Story and Photos by PA3 Barry Jeffrey Bena, District Seven Public Affairs

The morning sun - the sign of a fresh new day in Miami Beach, Fla. Some residents go for their morning jog. Some go to their local convenience store for their morning cup of coffee. And on this day, some go outside and find a container ship in their local marina.

The morning of June 22, Miami Beach residents woke up and found that a large freighter had made the breakwall at Miami Beach Marina its temporary home.



A Coast Guard smallboat crew from Station Miami Beach helps direct vessel traffic around the Rio Haina, Sunday, June 22. While outbound from Miami, the Rio Haina, a 252-foot Panamanian-flagged vessel, reportedly lost power and allided with the Miami Beach Marina breakwall.

At around 1:20 a.m., Coast Guard Sector Miami personnel received a report that the motor vessel Rio Haina, a Panamanian-flagged 252-foot freighter, lost power and steering capabilities while outbound from the Miami River and slammed into the breakwall at the marina.

A response boat from Station Miami Beach was called out and verified there were no signs of pollution, and crewmembers aboard the freighter were not injured. Though there was damage, both to the breakwall and, ironically, a Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel tied up at the marina.

Four pollution investigators, two marine investigators and one marine

inspector from the Sector Miami preventions office were tasked with securing the area and determining what caused the ship to crash through the breakwall.

“We immediately requested that they take soundings to determine the levels in their tanks and ensure there were no compromises in the hull,” said Lt.j.g. Michelle Schopp, the senior investigating officer at Sector Miami.

Meanwhile, shocked onlookers walking through the marina were overheard questioning: “What happened?” “Did they fall asleep?”

Throughout the morning and day, a crew from the Associated Marine Salvage, Inc., put together a plan to get the Rio Haina safely off the breakwall.

“The Coast Guard and the AMS crew worked closely to expedite the safe removal of Rio Haina

without impacting the environment or causing further damage to the vessel or breakwall,” said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Lingaitis, Sector Miami’s chief of inspections.

After losing power and realizing they were drifting toward the breakwall, the pilot made the decision to drop anchor and attempt to slow the freighter. Upon impact, the anchor was lodged under the ship. As such, the first step was to cut the anchor chain to free some stress from the freighter.

The next step was to de-ballast the tanks.

To help maintain the stability of the ship, large tanks aboard the freighter are either filled with or emptied of water. When the ship has very little cargo, ballast tanks are filled with water to help the vessel ‘sit’ better in the water. Likewise, when the vessel is carrying heavy cargo water is released from the ballast tanks.

During high tide, the Rio Haina was safely refloated and towed by tugs to the Bernuth Terminal across from the Port of Miami.

The Coast Guard’s inspection of the vessel found several discrepancies that are currently under investigation.

“We’re all working hard to bring the Rio Haina into compliance with U.S. and other federal regulations to prevent this type of incident from happening again,” said Lingaitis.



The Rio Haina, a 252-foot container vessel, crashed into the breakwall at Miami Beach Marina in Miami Beach. No injuries were reported, though at least one vessel sustained damage due to the accident.

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