

(PPC)
CG-785

22 November, 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM TO COMMANDER POLLIO

Subj: Grounding of SS F. J. LUCKENBACH; 3d Naval District Boarding Report thereon

1. Consideration has been given to the 3d Naval District Boarding Report in connection with the grounding of the SS F. J. LUCKENBACH near Belmar, New Jersey, on 27 October, 1943.
2. Reference is made in the report to the fact that the vessel arrived at Ambrose Lightship in very heavy weather and because of the weather was unable to procure the services of a pilot to pilot her into the harbor. It is stated that the vessel received a message that the pilot boat would be unable to put a pilot aboard due to heavy weather and ordered the vessel to stand by. The Master states that as a result of attempting to comply with this order, his ship went aground.
3. In this connection, the New York Naval Port Director's own records show that seventeen pilots were placed on seventeen vessels during the very period this Master claims he waited and could not secure a pilot. The Sandy Hook Pilots lowered their yawl and handled twenty-nine pilots on twenty-nine boats during the gale in question.
4. The fact that a highpowered vessel such as the LUCKENBACH becoming unmanageable and getting on the beach would confirm the severity of the weather.
5. Two vessels whose Masters were acquainted with New York Harbor approaches did take their vessels inside past the pilot boats (while said pilot boats were boarding other vessels under storm difficulties), there anchored in smoother and more sheltered waters and awaited their pilot's arrival in safety. The LUCKENBACH, of course, could have done the same thing. There is no law or regulation forbidding a vessel to enter New York or any other port without waiting for a pilot, if it is deemed more hazardous to wait than to proceed without the pilot. For this reason, no action is necessary with respect to the recommendation of the Master of the LUCKENBACH that the regulations prohibiting ships from entering the harbor without a pilot, should be modified when conditions arise which make it impossible to secure a pilot and the safety of the ship is jeopardized.

/s/ JOHN S. DELANO
Special Assistant, Pilot Control