

Phosphate Freighter Grounds Near Skyway Bridge

Story and photo by PA3 Robert L. Simpson, PADET St. Petersburg

TAMPA, Fla. -- A 378-foot Panamanian freighter ran aground about 400-yards east of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge in Tampa, Fla., about 5 a.m. March 28.

The *Antilles II* was outbound from the Port of Tampa carrying 10,000-metric tons of phosphate when the vessel lost its main propulsion. The pilot of the *Antilles II* was able to steer the vessel aground and drop anchor in shallow water to avoid an allision with the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. Tampa Bay's main shipping channel was closed to vessel traffic as a precautionary measure.

Two 25-foot response boats and one 41-foot boat from Station St. Petersburg, in St.



ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- The Panamanian flagged freighter vessel *Antilles II* is being assisted by two tug boats after running aground near the Sunshine Skyway Bridge here. The vessel ran aground after losing power to its main propulsion in the early morning. Coast Guard photograph by PA3 Robert L. Simpson.

Petersburg, Fla., responded to the scene, along with several marine units from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The Coast Guard captain of the port established a 100-yard safety zone around the grounded vessel. No injuries, pollution or damage to marine life, the crew of the *Antilles II*, or the Sunshine Skyway Bridge were reported in conjunction with the incident.

Coast Guard marine inspectors boarded the vessel to begin their investigation to determine why the *Antilles II* lost power and to inspect the vessel for damage. Three tug boats from the Port of Tampa attempted to free the vessel. After several unsuccessful attempts, the *Antilles II* was successfully refloated at about 12 p.m.

"While not a routine event, the loss of power by vessels is an event we and our partner agencies have planned and trained for," said Capt. Joseph Servidio, commander of Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg. "Today's joint response demonstrates the benefits of that planning and training."

In order to avoid vessel traffic in the area of the Port of Tampa, the *Antilles II* was towed to an empty berth in Port Manatee, Fla., where the Coast Guard continued the investigation of the vessel for more damages. Results from the investigation concluded that the *Antilles II* had lost main propulsion because of a clogged fuel filter.

Repairs of the *Antilles II* were completed March 29, and the vessel left Port Manatee en-route to Caldera, Costa Rica.