

Vessel runs aground off Richards Bay

A coal-carrying vessel ran aground off Richards Bay Harbour on Monday (19 August), Port management said. On Tuesday (20 August) the port was re-opened



"While leaving the port on Monday afternoon the vessel MV Smart, carrying 147,650 tons of coal, ran aground off the port's entrance," chief harbour master of Transnet National Ports Authority, Captain Rufus Lekala, said in a statement.

He said the vessel finished loading at Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) at 10am on Monday and sailed from the terminal just before 1.30pm.

At the time of the incident, the vessel was no longer under TNPA pilotage. It is said the vessel experienced engine failure on leaving the port.

"Three TNPA tugs tried to assist the vessel but to no avail. The vessel has buckled and broken in two and is partly submerged," he said.

Twenty three crew members, including the master were airlifted from the vessel by the TNPA helicopter.

TNPA said it was closely monitoring any impact on the environment. There is no anticipated economic impact on the Richards Bay or its services.

"The entrance channel is safe for shipping, but because of the adverse weather conditions ingress and egress to the port has been suspended until further notice," Lekala said.

"On Tuesday (20 August) Richards Bay Harbour was reopened and work at the port returned to normal," Richards Bay port manager Preston Khomo said in a statement.

The 230-metre MV Smart has been abandoned. "Three salvage crew, one from the South African Maritime Safety Authority and two from marine services group Subtech, are on board to make a damage assessment," the statement said.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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