

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Log M-201

ISSUED: November 10, 1982

Forwarded to:

Mr. Anthony L. Kucera
President
The American Waterways Operators, Inc.
1600 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22209

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-82-42

Early in the morning of June 14, 1979, a fire erupted in the engineroom of the M/V THERESA F while the vessel was proceeding with a one-barge tow upbound in the Mississippi River. Shortly after the fire broke out, the mate on watch in the pilothouse intentionally grounded the tow on the left descending bank of the river at mile 28.5, and the crew activated the CO-2 fire extinguishing system to protect the engineroom. However, it was not possible to shut off the engineroom ventilation system because the fire blocked access to the blower controls located in the engineroom. As a result, the continuous supply of air to the engineroom diluted the CO-2, rendering it ineffective. There were no injuries as a result of the fire, but damage to the vessel was estimated to be \$2 million.

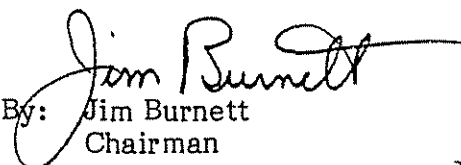
The Safety Board believes that, if the vessel had been fitted with remote blower controls so that the engineroom ventilation could have been shut down, the CO-2 system would have been effective in extinguishing the fire, and the fire damage would have been greatly reduced. The Board is concerned that the lack of a remote shutdown capability of engineroom ventilation systems may compromise the effectiveness of CO-2 fire extinguishing systems on other towing vessels.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the American Waterways Operators, Inc.:

Disseminate to your membership information concerning the importance of providing a remote shutdown for the engineroom ventilation systems from a location outside of the engineroom on all vessels equipped with fixed CO-2 fire protection systems. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-82-42)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (P.L. 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendation. Therefore, we would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY and ENGEN, Members, concurred in this recommendation. McADAMS, Member, did not participate.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman

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