

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :  
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :  
:  
INTERVIEW OF :  
MIKE MENDES :  
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held  
on Friday, October 22, 2004, commencing at 8:30 a.m., in  
Tarpon Springs, Florida, before:

BOB FORD, NTSB  
BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB  
LT. ERIC STEIN, USCG  
LT. HEATH HARTLEY, USCG  
CHRIS CONNER, SUN CRUZ

1                                   P R O C E E D I N G S

2                   MR. CURTIS: Good morning, it's Friday, October  
3 22, 2004, and we're in Tarpon Springs, Florida, to interview  
4 Mr. Mike Mendes, who was a deck hand on the Shuttle Express  
5 II, regarding the fire on that vessel on the 17th of  
6 October. We're here, Mike, to investigate this accident,  
7 and try to find the cause of the fire, and we'd just like to  
8 speak to you. If you have any information that may assist  
9 us in the investigation.

10                   So, what I would like to do, we've been over how  
11 we're going to conduct the interview, and I'd like to go  
12 around the table and everybody identify themselves and who  
13 they are with and then once we get through that we'll go  
14 ahead with the questioning. My name is Brian Curtis, I'm a  
15 marine engineering investigator with the NTSB, and we'll go  
16 around the table.

17                   MR. HEATH HARTLEY: I'm Heath Hartley, Lieutenant  
18 Chief of Port Operations at MSO Tampa, with the Coast Guard.

19                   CAPTAIN CONNER: Chris Conner, Port Captain, Port  
20 Richey Casino.

21                   MR. FORD: Bob Ford, investigator in charge, NTSB.

22                   MR. STEIN: Lieutenant Eric Stein, senior  
23 investigating officer, Marine Safety Office, Tampa, Coast  
24 Guard.

25                   MR. CURTIS: I'll start with questioning Mike.

1 It's Brian Curtis, and then we'll go around the table and we  
2 have to go around a couple times if people have any follow  
3 up questions. The first thing I'd like to open up with is  
4 just give your account, and include times as best you can,  
5 when you went to work that morning, and if you can remember  
6 times, it's all the more beneficial if you could just  
7 everything you remember, just go through the entire accident  
8 until the point that you were safely ashore or whatever  
9 happened.

10 MR. MENDES: Did you want me to just start from  
11 the time I got there?

12 MR. CURTIS: Yes.

13 MR. MENDES: From the time I punched in?

14 MR. CURTIS: Yes, the time you report to work.

15 MR. MENDES: I reported to work around quarter to  
16 eight that morning. I start at 8:00. I was scheduled for  
17 the work dock that morning. There's two docks, main dock  
18 and work dock. I was scheduled for the work dock. The Tin  
19 Can was at the work dock, our other boat, and the first  
20 thing I did when I got on there was check air strainers,  
21 generator strainers, made sure all the garbage cans were  
22 filled with bags, put them back in their spots, and by that  
23 time it was about 8:30, and I was called over to the main  
24 dock because someone didn't come in that morning.

25 So, I headed over there at 8:30. By the time I

1 got there, the other deck hand, Cory, had pretty much got  
2 everything ready, ice, bar, garbage cans, all's I had to do  
3 was wipe down the bridge windows, and wipe down the top deck  
4 seats, and then we were ready to board at 9:00.

5           We boarded everybody at 9:00, we left the dock  
6 around, I'd say a little bit earlier than usual, a couple  
7 minutes earlier, 9:25 or so, maybe. Everything ran  
8 smoothly. We got out to the big vessel, unloaded everybody  
9 as usual, headed back in. We hit the turn where the  
10 boat was -- I don't know exactly what -- we hit the channel,  
11 and everything ran smoothly. Cory and I, the other deck  
12 hand, were doing our usual clean up from everybody,  
13 newspapers, throwing all the trash away, when Cory and I  
14 thought we smelled smoke.

15           We both looked down at the starboard side and we  
16 saw a little bit of white smoke coming up through the floor  
17 panel. At this time, engines, everything was sounding  
18 pretty good, nothing sounded out of the ordinary, everything  
19 was running smooth.

20           We then proceeded to open up the engine room hatch  
21 to see what was on -- what was smoking, and as we did that  
22 it just filled the lower deck with black smoke. We dropped  
23 it real quick, dropped the hatch. Cory ran up to Captain  
24 Mario to tell him that we had smoke down in the engine room,  
25 and by this time, I was taking off -- moving chairs and

1 tables off the starboard side engine floor panel, and as  
2 Cory come down, he was -- it took him about a second to come  
3 running back down the vessel.

4 He grabbed the fire extinguisher from the port  
5 side, we each lifted up a corner of the starboard side  
6 hatch, and at this time, we let more black smoke in, and we  
7 might've raised it about two inches off the ground, and  
8 flames shot out like two feet. It shot up our arms, we felt  
9 the heat, we dropped it.

10 I ran back up to Captain Mario and told him that  
11 we had a bigger situation than we thought. Captain Mario  
12 ran out right behind me. By the time we got back down in  
13 there, you couldn't see three inches in front of your face.

14 There was black smoke everywhere. Captain Mario and I  
15 tried to lift the starboard side up again, so Cory could  
16 spray. He got a couple shots off of the fire extinguisher,  
17 but again, flames just shot out. Captain Mario dropped it,  
18 I dropped one side.

19 By this time, we couldn't even breathe. Cory was  
20 getting dizzy. Captain Mario went and grabbed the fire hose  
21 at the time, but we couldn't even see the panel as far as to  
22 turn on the fire hose, the switch I mean, at the  
23 switchboard. We couldn't see two -- like I said, three  
24 inches in front of us at this time. It was just the flames  
25 were climbing up the starboard side wall.

1           At this time, there was a gentleman on a pleasure  
2 boat, said he flew with the Coast Guard on his off day, and  
3 he made us get off the boat, and it happened that fast. In  
4 a matter of about 10 minutes, the fire just took over  
5 everything.

6           MR. CURTIS: You sustained injuries?

7           MR. MENDES: No, I felt a little dizzy, and that  
8 just -- but once I hit the pleasure boat, and we sat out  
9 there for a minute, I was -- I had no shortness of breath or  
10 anything like that so I wasn't really concerned about any of  
11 that. Once I caught my breath, I felt fine.

12          MR. CURTIS: The transit time, from the time you  
13 leave the dock to the time to get to the vessel, what is  
14 that?

15          MR. MENDES: About a half hour.

16          MR. CURTIS: About a half hour?

17          MR. MENDES: Yep, 15 minutes through the channel,  
18 and 15 minutes out.

19          MR. CURTIS: Could you just run us through the  
20 times like what time your shift normally ends and finishes  
21 and what the normal time you leave the vessel at this time,  
22 xxx?

23          MR. MENDES: Well, like I said we left the dock  
24 around 9:25 that morning. So, we probably hit the boat, I  
25 never looked down at our watches, really, but probably -- we

1 left the boat -- we got to the boat at - at least 10:00. We  
2 unloaded. It takes about 10, 15 minutes to unload. I  
3 believe we saw the fire. I remember seeing -- I remember  
4 looking down at the -- the first time I looked down at the  
5 watches that time and it was when we hit the pleasure boat,  
6 and it was about five to 11:00.

7           So, I say all -- we tried fighting the fire, but  
8 around 25 after 10:00 or so, and like I said, it was about 10  
9 minutes. We couldn't even see through that two inches in  
10 front of our faces, and we're wearing white shirts. I  
11 couldn't even see Cory.

12           MR. CURTIS: The pump switch you mentioned, where  
13 is the fire pump switch located?

14           MR. MENDES: The fire pump switch was located on  
15 the switchboard by the bar, on the far starboard side of the  
16 vessel.

17           MR. CURTIS: (Indiscernible.)

18           MR. MENDES: It's in the back.

19           MR. CURTIS: And the hatch, was that hatch  
20 normally closed?

21           MR. MENDES: Always closed.

22           MR. CURTIS: How many hatches were to access the  
23 engine rooms?

24           MR. MENDES: There's the one -- well, there's  
25 three altogether. There's the hatch over the starboard

1 engine. There was a hatch over the port engine, and then  
2 you have your -- the engine room hatch where you can  
3 actually go down into the engine room. So, there's three to  
4 the engine rooms.

5 MR. CURTIS: Which ones did you notice the smoke  
6 from?

7 MR. MENDES: The starboard side. It was just  
8 creeping out the corner of the floor panel.

9 MR. CURTIS: The main hatch?

10 MR. MENDES: Not the main hatch. The over the  
11 engine hatch. The main hatch is towards -- towards the back  
12 of the vessel, towards the bar end.

13 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

14 MR. MENDES: Yeah, we never saw anything come out  
15 of the engine room hatch itself. We saw it over the quarter  
16 panel, which, you know, we can move if they needed to  
17 fix -- work on the engines or anything. It was just a hatch  
18 over the engine itself.

19 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

20 MR. MENDES: With just the floor panel that popped  
21 up.

22 MR. CURTIS: Maintenance on the engines that  
23 morning, did you do anything on those?

24 MR. MENDES: No, we have engineers that do that.

25 MR. CURTIS: So, you didn't touch the engines --



1 MR. MENDES: No.

2 MR. CURTIS: -- maintenance wise? Were there, as  
3 far as problems with the engines, had you heard anybody  
4 complain about problems with the engine on that vessel in  
5 the past?

6 MR. MENDES: I never heard any complaints. I was  
7 there when the Caterpillar people put new heads on, and I  
8 believe the next day, we -- I -- my next -- after they put  
9 the -- after they put the new heads on, it was a -- that was  
10 a Thursday. I worked that Friday night, and I was mainly  
11 just it was layover, and we were doing our normal duties.  
12 They had someone out there with a computer, another  
13 Caterpillar guy. I don't know what he was doing that day.  
14 I was just more concerned on my duties during layover, so, I  
15 don't really know what he was checking.

16 MR. CURTIS: So, you worked with a CAT dealer and  
17 that was the Thursday --

18 MR. MENDES: Thursday, yeah, I helped -- well, I  
19 was just there to assist the Caterpillar guys any way they  
20 could, grab their tools --

21 MR. CURTIS: And that was just three days  
22 previous --

23 MR. MENDES: -- or hand them down that was  
24 Thursday.

25 MR. CURTIS: -- to the accident?

1 MR. MENDES: Yes.

2 MR. CURTIS: They worked on which engine?

3 MR. MENDES: The starboard side, starboard engine.

4 MR. CURTIS: Starboard engine, and what were they  
5 doing on the engine?

6 MR. MENDES: They put new heads on them. A new  
7 head on the starboard side of the engine.

8 MR. CURTIS: The outboard side?

9 MR. MENDES: It was the inboard on the end side I  
10 think.

11 MR. CURTIS: The inboard side?

12 MR. MENDES: Yeah, I'm not too sure about engines.  
13 I'm not a --

14 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

15 MR. MENDES: -- good person on engines.

16 MR. CURTIS: So, it would be the starboard  
17 inboard --

18 MR. MENDES: Right.

19 MR. CURTIS: -- head?

20 MR. MENDES: I would think.

21 MR. CURTIS: Were you working with them to the  
22 point you noticed if they removed the fuel lines off the top  
23 of the engine to do this work?

24 MR. MENDES: Yeah, all the fuel lines were off,  
25 and yeah, the fuel lines had to come off to put the block

1 back on.

2 MR. CURTIS: The smaller, high pressure lines on  
3 top of the engine?

4 MR. MENDES: They were all disconnected, yeah.  
5 That all goes through the block area.

6 MR. CURTIS: They removed them from the engine to  
7 do their work?

8 MR. MENDES: Yep.

9 MR. CURTIS: We've been down to the vessel. I  
10 noticed there's pumps on the forward end of each engine.  
11 Could you identify where the bilge and where the fire pumps  
12 are? Which are which?

13 MR. MENDES: I know where the bilge is, the bilge  
14 is towards the front of the engine room. Like, I just  
15 started there the 26th of September, so, I'm fairly new. I  
16 knew where the switch was on the switchboard, but I couldn't  
17 really tell you where the -- all's I knew was that the turn  
18 on was down in the engine room that we couldn't get to, and  
19 that's all I -- as far as anything else down in the engine  
20 room, I couldn't tell you. I don't really play -- I don't  
21 really work down in the engine room.

22 MR. CURTIS: The bilage pump switch?

23 MR. MENDES: Bilage pump switch that is on the  
24 switchboard.

25 MR. CURTIS: And the location of that is?

1           MR. MENDES: Towards the back of the -- on the  
2 panel. There's only one panel on the boat, and that's  
3 towards the stern of the boat.

4           MR. CURTIS: Also, the fire pump and the bilage  
5 pump switch are on the same panel?

6           MR. MENDES: Yes, I believe so.

7           MR. CURTIS: Let's get a little bit of your  
8 experience, your background, what you did to get into this  
9 industry?

10          MR. MENDES: I just -- I just was looking for a  
11 job. I never worked on the water or anything like that. I  
12 worked for the Parks Department before that. Pasco County.

13          MR. CURTIS: Okay.

14          MR. MENDES: For five years.

15          MR. CURTIS: When did you start with Sun Cruz?

16          MR. MENDES: The 26th of September.

17          MR. CURTIS: Training, did you get any training  
18 when you started with the company?

19          MR. MENDES: I just trained as I go as far as  
20 learning how to tie the ropes at port and at the vessel, and  
21 I've just -- I just got off a training on the door as far as  
22 that rope, because there's two deck hands and a senior mate.  
23 One deck hand and a senior deck hand, and one of them runs  
24 the doors, one of them runs the bow and the stern, and I'm  
25 just learning all the control panels and everything like

1 that as we speak.

2 MR. CURTIS: Any safety training, man overboard,  
3 fire type training?

4 MR. MENDES: No, not yet. As to -- I believe  
5 as -- when I got hired everybody had just got done with all  
6 their training and CPR's and things like that.

7 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

8 MR. MENDES: So, no, I haven't -- I haven't had a  
9 chance to go to any of the classes yet.

10 MR. CURTIS: Had you been on the vessel when they  
11 had any drills?

12 MR. MENDES: No. No, I haven't been part of any  
13 drills yet either.

14 MR. CURTIS: Had they ever showed you how to  
15 release the (indiscernible) system?

16 MR. MENDES: No.

17 MR. CURTIS: Did you know the location of the  
18 (indicernible) system?

19 MR. MENDES: No, I didn't know. I learned it  
20 afterwards. I've been -- someone had said it was down in  
21 the engine room, because someone had brought that up, and it  
22 was so dark down in there that nobody could get to it.

23 MR. CURTIS: Once you got on the passenger vessel,  
24 where did he take you to? Where did you go?

25 MR. MENDES: We just, maybe, about 50 to 75 feet

1 away to another mile marker that was out there on the  
2 channel marker where -- we just sat there for a minute with  
3 the sheriff's boat.

4 MR. CURTIS: Did the Captain mention that morning  
5 any type of steering or propulsion problems, transmission  
6 problems, any problems?

7 MR. MENDES: No, everything was running smooth as  
8 far as I know. I mean, we didn't hear anything different as  
9 far as engine wise, or any of that and Captain Mario didn't  
10 say that any -- he said everything was working fine, so.

11 MR. CURTIS: The Caterpillar rep you worked with  
12 the previous Thursday, in working with him, did he ever  
13 mention anything that stuck out in your mind about the  
14 engine, the job that he was doing that leaks, or a problem  
15 here?

16 MR. MENDES: No. No, as far as I said there  
17 was -- that they were -- it was running smooth.

18 MR. CURTIS: Do you recall the name of the CAT rep  
19 you were working with?

20 MR. MENDES: I believe his name was Paul.

21 MR. CURTIS: How long did you work that day? How  
22 long was he there?

23 MR. MENDES: He -- he might have -- gee, I didn't  
24 look at the time. I'd say, maybe, 9:30 or so, quarter to  
25 10:00, he got there, maybe 10 o'clock. Like I said, I

1 didn't look at the time. I was just sitting waiting for  
2 him, and they were still there. They were just going out on  
3 a run before I got a phone call that I had to leave to take  
4 my fiancé to the hospital. I believe I left there at 2:00  
5 and they were just going out to make a run.

6 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

7 MR. MENDES: The engine got done around 2:00, so  
8 they were going out and making a run to see how it was  
9 running. By that time -- I left early that day at 2:00.

10 MR. CURTIS: After that did you work on the vessel  
11 between the repairs until you --

12 MR. MENDES: Yeah, I worked that vessel Friday  
13 night, from 6:00 to 2:30 in the morning, and everything ran  
14 smooth. We had all our runs, and everything ran smooth, and  
15 I was back -- I was off on Saturday, and then I was back in  
16 on Sunday to work the vessel.

17 MR. CURTIS: During the accident, was there a  
18 point where you were told to put on your life jacket?

19 MR. MENDES: No, no, we never even thought about  
20 that we were just trying to do what we could to see if we  
21 could stop it and save the vessel, and by that time, we  
22 just -- everybody getting dizzy and choking, I never put the  
23 vest -- I never put the life jackets on.

24 MR. CURTIS: Where were those stowed, the life  
25 jackets?

1           MR. MENDES: They were stowed in the closet area,  
2 in the middle of the vessel, and Cory was dizzy, staggering  
3 a little bit, and we were just pretty much getting out of  
4 the smoke, and went to the stern of the boat, to the bow of  
5 the boat, and just kind of hung onto him. He was feeling  
6 kind of --

7           MR. CURTIS: And the life jackets, were you ever  
8 told where they were or you just found those yourselves?

9           MR. MENDES: Oh, no, they -- we're to put them on  
10 every time we tie up to the boat and anything like that.  
11 Open up doors or -- I knew right where that was. That's the  
12 first thing they showed me when I started.

13           MR. CURTIS: Thanks, Mike.

14           MR. MENDES: That's the first I grabbed.

15           MR. CURTIS: I'm going to turn the questioning  
16 over. We'll go around the table now.

17           MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Heath Hartley from the  
18 U.S. Coast Guard MSO in Tampa. Mike, you said you started  
19 on the 26th of September?

20           MR. MENDES: Uh-huh.

21           MR. HARTLEY: That gives you roughly about three  
22 weeks with the company, coming up on a month. How many  
23 vessels does the company operate as shuttles?

24           MR. MENDES: Two since I've been there. The  
25 (indiscernible) and the Tin Can.



1           MR. HARTLEY:  When you said the (indiscernible) is  
2  that the Express Shuttle II?

3           MR. MENDES:  Yeah, yeah, the one that burned.

4           MR. HARTLEY:  How many have you worked on?  Both  
5  of them?

6           MR. MENDES:  Both of them.

7           MR. HARTLEY:  As far as training, orientation  
8  training, when you came on board the vessel for the first  
9  time, did anyone from the company show you where any  
10 emergency equipment was stowed other than life jackets?

11          MR. MENDES:  I was shown life jackets and the fire  
12 extinguishers, I saw on my own.

13          MR. HARTLEY:  Yes.

14          MR. MENDES:  But no, other than that I saw the  
15 fire hoses are right out in the open and things like that.

16          MR. HARTLEY:  Stuff you visually saw on your own?

17          MR. MENDES:  Yeah.

18          MR. HARTLEY:  Were there any emergency  
19 instructions that you noted, like on the bulkheads for crew  
20 or passengers to see in case of an emergency?

21          MR. MENDES:  There are signs, but I never  
22 really -- we've got signs all over the boat, but I never  
23 really sat there and read them.

24          MR. HARTLEY:  Okay.

25          MR. MENDES:  So, I mean, there's emergency signs

1 up, what they say or anything, I never really -- I never sat  
2 down and read them, so.

3 MR. HARTLEY: The other deck hand, how long have  
4 you worked with him?

5 MR. MENDES: Since I started. On and off, yeah,  
6 we were -- with our schedules, we're always working with  
7 somebody different.

8 MR. HARTLEY: You felt comfortable working with  
9 this crewman?

10 MR. MENDES: Yeah, yeah, actually he was one of  
11 the ones that was on my pre-hire, my orientation day. He  
12 was the one that showed me the ropes.

13 MR. HARTLEY: How many times have you worked with  
14 Captain Mario, up to this day?

15 MR. MENDES: Oh, I'd say -- I'd say at least a  
16 half a dozen times.

17 MR. HARTLEY: So, you knew Captain Mario as well?

18 MR. MENDES: Yeah, yep.

19 MR. HARTLEY: When you first noticed the smoke  
20 coming out of the engine hatch, did you say that was white?

21 MR. MENDES: Yeah.

22 MR. HARTLEY: Like little trails of white?

23 MR. MENDES: Yeah, it was almost like cigarette  
24 smoke.

25 MR. HARTLEY: You didn't hear any noise coming

1 from the engine room prior to that?

2 MR. MENDES: Nope, everything --

3 MR. HARTLEY: No lurch in the vessel, or -

4 MR. MENDES: No, no, everything --

5 MR. HARTLEY: -- powering up of the motors or  
6 anything?

7 MR. MENDES: Nope, everything was running smooth.

8 That's why when we saw the smoke we figured we'd just open  
9 up the engine room hatch and look down in there, but then we  
10 noticed that it was a bigger situation than it was.

11 MR. HARTLEY: What do you call that area? Was  
12 that like a salon or what would you call it? The deck  
13 hands? The area you were in when you saw the smoke?

14 MR. MENDES: We just --

15 MR. HARTLEY: The main deck?

16 MR. MENDES: -- call it the main deck, yeah.

17 MR. HARTLEY: It's not like the salon --

18 MR. MENDES: No.

19 MR. HARTLEY: -- or cabin, or --

20 MR. MENDES: No, they just -- it's the main deck.

21 MR. HARTLEY: Were you inside?

22 MR. MENDES: Yeah, we were inside.

23 MR. HARTLEY: For the entire transit back?

24 MR. MENDES: No, as soon as we drop off, we  
25 automatically go up to the top, and we clean up.

1 MR. HARTLEY: The sun deck?

2 MR. MENDES: Yeah, we clean up everything that's  
3 up there, ash trays, cigarette butts, and straighten up  
4 chairs. So, we're up there for about five, six minutes.

5 MR. HARTLEY: Okay.

6 MR. MENDES: By the time we can come back down and  
7 start cleaning up the bottom area.

8 MR. HARTLEY: Is that what you were doing at the  
9 time?

10 MR. MENDES: Yep. Yeah, when we came down, we  
11 were -- we just about had everything cleaned up. We had  
12 everything cleaned up - up top, on the top deck, and we just  
13 about had everything cleaned up on the lower deck when we  
14 both thought we -- thought we smelled smoke, and we both  
15 were looking around, and that's where we saw the white smoke  
16 come up the starboard engine hatch.

17 MR. HARTLEY: You stated that you opened the  
18 hatch.

19 MR. MENDES: Uh-huh.

20 MR. HARTLEY: Like the jump down hatch?

21 MR. MENDES: Yep.

22 MR. HARTLEY: And lots of black smoke?

23 MR. MENDES: Yeah, it just about filled the lower  
24 deck almost, just on that couple seconds we had it open.

25 MR. HARTLEY: Did you close that hatch?

1           MR. MENDES: Yeah, we dropped it immediately and  
2 shut it down, and that's when Cory ran up and told Captain  
3 Mario that we had smoke in the engine room.

4           MR. HARTLEY: How long do you think it took from  
5 the time the other deck hand left until Captain Mario came  
6 back with the other deck hand? Was it a long time, or a  
7 very short time?

8           MR. MENDES: No, it was a very short time, because  
9 like I said, when I -- when he ran up to tell Captain Mario  
10 of the smoke that we saw, I was already moving chairs and  
11 tables out, off the other hatch, and by that time, he came  
12 down, and the second time that Captain Mario was told was me  
13 running up. So, I'd say at least, not even five minutes.

14          MR. HARTLEY: So, did he come down?

15          MR. MENDES: Oh, he followed me -- yeah, he didn't  
16 come down the first time.

17          MR. HARTLEY: Really?

18          MR. MENDES: When I ran back up, and told him that  
19 we had fire that it wasn't just smoke, there was -- there  
20 was a serious fire down in there, he ran down and followed  
21 me down the second time, but that was only, like I said,  
22 that one might have been a minute or two.

23          MR. HARTLEY: Yes.

24          MR. MENDES: From the time that Cory went up, and  
25 then the time that I went up.

1           MR. HARTLEY: Obviously, from the smoke, you could  
2 tell there was a fire? (Indiscernible) you believe that?

3           MR. MENDES: Yeah, when we opened up the -- when  
4 we opened up the engine room hatch, and it filled with black  
5 smoke, I mean, I'm not a fireman, but once I saw the black  
6 smoke, I knew that there was more than just a little smoke  
7 down there. There was a fire down in there.

8           MR. HARTLEY: Who was present there at that time?

9           MR. MENDES: Cory and I, the other deck hand.

10          MR. HARTLEY: Okay, thank you.

11          MR. MENDES: You're welcome.

12          MR. STEIN: This is Lieutenant Eric Stein, with  
13 the Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office in Tampa. So, Mike,  
14 when you were hired, what kind of orientation were you  
15 given? Were you given any paperwork or documents to read  
16 and review? Like these are your responsibilities, or can  
17 you just give me a sense of, upon your hire, what the  
18 company gave you as far as training, requirements, what was  
19 expected of you? Just give me an outline of that.

20          MR. MENDES: On my pre-hire, it was just, I  
21 ran -- I ran for, I think -- I believe I started at 8  
22 o'clock, and I left at 3:00. By then, I ran -- I ran with  
23 Cory, he showed me ropes. That was pretty much all, you  
24 know, they want to make sure nobody falls in the water. So,  
25 they made sure I learned the ropes that one day, and if they

1 think I could catch onto the ropes that's when they  
2 would -- they would hire me.

3 After that of course, I took my drug test, and  
4 they called me back in two days, and then I got the job, and  
5 that's when I got all the employee handbook, and things of  
6 that nature. The employee hand book pretty much covers what  
7 any employee handbook covers.

8 MR. STEIN: Would you sign this for me, Mike?

9 MR. MENDES: Sure.

10 MR. STEIN: This is what's called, for the tape,  
11 it's Sun Cruz Port Richey Casino Shuttle Procedures is the  
12 title of the document, and I'm going to have Mike go ahead  
13 and just initial that -- that's the document that he  
14 received.

15 MR. MENDES: Initial or just sign?

16 MR. STEIN: Go ahead and sign it, Mike, thanks.  
17 This is part of his orientation. What are your  
18 responsibilities, Mike, as far as a deck hand on the  
19 shuttle? Can you just kind of outline that? I understand  
20 that you handle the lines, but what are your  
21 responsibilities in the morning when you arrive for work,  
22 and then, during the shuttle, and before you leave that  
23 night, what are your responsibilities?

24 MR. MENDES: My responsibilities when I get there  
25 is to make sure the bridge is clean, holes are pumped out of

1 water, all the water pumped out of the holes, garbage,  
2 getting bars ready, untying spring lines, making sure that  
3 the windows and everything are clean, bridge, and all around  
4 the vessel, seats are wiped down, that's pretty much it.  
5 The engineers take care of the engine, and that's all done  
6 before we really get there.

7 MR. STEIN: In the Coast Guard we have  
8 performance -- PQS, we call it. It's like a training system  
9 where, you know, hey, now I'm qualified to handle lines, now  
10 I'm qualified to pump bilges. Did you guys have any sort of  
11 a program in the company as far as some of the senior deck  
12 hands, or somebody signing you off that yes, Mike, you're  
13 qualified now to handle these responsibilities? What's the  
14 process for qualification?

15 MR. MENDES: I've never seen anything as far as  
16 anything that I had to sign. Usually all's -- I've been  
17 there for, you know, senior deck hands would show me doors  
18 or the ropes, and they're the ones that went to my higher  
19 ups as far as saying, okay, he can handle that, but I've  
20 never written -- I've never signed anything, or hand  
21 anything given to me that -- saying I'm qualified or  
22 anything like that, just word. Just by mouth.

23 MR. STEIN: Is there any type of a checklist that  
24 you go through for getting the boat ready?

25 MR. MENDES: Yeah, there's a checklist as far as



1 ice --

2 MR. STEIN: Does it look like that?

3 MR. MENDES: Yeah, that's it.

4 MR. STEIN: For the tape, this is called A.M.

5 Daily Checklist, and this is a checklist that the deck hands  
6 use to get the vessels ready for working through the day.

7 Mike's going to sign that for us. Thank you. So, as far as  
8 you know, these basically are the two documents that define  
9 your job?

10 MR. MENDES: Right.

11 MR. STEIN: This is the only written information  
12 that you've received?

13 MR. MENDES: Yes.

14 MR. STEIN: Okay, that's all I have.

15 MR. FORD: Bob Ford, NTSB. What is your age, I  
16 didn't hear that?

17 MR. MENDES: Thirty-two.

18 MR. FORD: You said Cory went and grabbed an  
19 extinguisher, did he ever discharge it?

20 MR. MENDES: Yes, for a second.

21 MR. FORD: What type of extinguisher was it?

22 MR. MENDES: It was just a regular fire  
23 extinguisher as far as --

24 MR. FORD: Where was it located?

25 MR. MENDES: That was located directly on the port

1 side.

2 MR. FORD: Do you know how many extinguishers  
3 there are on the boat?

4 MR. MENDES: I know there's -- I believe there's  
5 two. I believe there's one up in the bridge, and one on the  
6 lower deck.

7 MR. FORD: You said you and Cory went up to the  
8 top deck, you said?

9 MR. MENDES: Uh-huh.

10 MR. FORD: And then you came down, so, you pretty  
11 much go around working in pairs, is that correct?

12 MR. MENDES: Usually, one will stay up, one will  
13 stay down, but we were -- slow ride in, we usually just try  
14 to stick -- we stick together in the morning and just  
15 talking while we're working, and things like that.

16 MR. FORD: You never had any reason to look into  
17 the engine space? During your shift, did anyone ever say,  
18 we, every once in a while open up a hatch and look in there  
19 to see if everything's fine, or is that not --

20 MR. MENDES: No.

21 MR. FORD: -- one of the procedures?

22 MR. MENDES: No, we never -- yeah, we never really  
23 take a look down in there to make sure anything's -- as long  
24 as everything's running good and everything sounds good,  
25 nobody really -- we don't really look down in there.

1           MR. FORD:  When you would get on in the morning,  
2 would Captain Mario give you any sort of instructions or  
3 say, direction for the day, or anything like that?

4           MR. MENDES:  No, every once in a while he would  
5 just come in and ask you, you know, ask if all the holes  
6 were pumped out and things like that and he might take a  
7 look down through everything real quick, but if there was  
8 nothing to do, or he didn't -- or, you know, he saw that  
9 everything was done, he wouldn't -- he wouldn't say  
10 anything.

11           MR. FORD:  I notice your pregnant wife, so, I'm  
12 going to get into an issue, which is -- we call the 72-hour  
13 history before the accident.  I've been there, I know how  
14 much sleep you can get in the last month.  So, what I  
15 want -- if you can start it about Thursday, and work your  
16 way through Sunday, what your schedule was.

17           If you want, you can write it down, and then just  
18 read it off, but what we're just looking for is how much  
19 sleep you got?  You're young, are you on any medication?

20           MR. MENDES:  Okay.

21           MR. FORD:  Were you staying up late watching the  
22 ball games, did anything upset, so, that's just to see your  
23 frame of mind on Sunday.

24           MR. MENDES:  Okay, Thursday, I came in my regular  
25 shift at 8 o'clock in the morning.  I'm usually there about

1 15 minutes earlier so, say quarter to eight. That was the  
2 day that the CAT guys were there working on the engines.  
3 Like I said earlier, I just was standing -- I just stood  
4 there and waited. If they needed anything, I ran for them.  
5 By this time it was 2 o'clock when the engines were done.  
6 They -- I was going to go out on the run with them, but I  
7 got a call from my fiancée saying she was having pains,  
8 things like that so, I asked Captain Chris if I could leave  
9 early that day. He said no problem, go on that was 2  
10 o'clock.

11 From there, I set up (indiscernible) in the  
12 hospital, probably for about three or four hours. Came  
13 home, took my shower, ate, and that was two, three, four,  
14 five, maybe around 6:00, 6:30, took a shower, ate, sat up  
15 and watched the ball games. I usually go to bed -- I try to  
16 go to bed at least around midnight every night, 12:30 at the  
17 latest.

18 MR. FORD: Yes.

19 MR. MENDES: I'm up at 6:30 in the morning. So, I  
20 was up -- well, actually, Thursday, I stayed up late. I  
21 could say I probably stayed up even later, maybe 1:00, 2:00.  
22 I didn't have to go to work the next day. I didn't have to  
23 be at work Friday until 6:00, so I slept. I slept until  
24 about 1:30 that day.

25 I got up, ate lunch, got my clothes together like

1 I always do, and my bag together. Got at work, went to -- I  
2 worked the main dock Friday night, and I got there at the  
3 main dock, I'd say, around 5:30. The shuttle wasn't in yet.  
4 The shuttle came in about 6 o'clock.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. MENDES: It ran a little bit later than it  
7 usually does. I waited for everyone to get off, and at this  
8 time, the boat is turned on the shore power, off the  
9 generators to shore power. I was met up by my other -- my  
10 senior deck hand, Bruce that night, and we did the same  
11 procedures. Our checklist, when we got there.

12 When all the customers got off the boat, we go on  
13 in. The day crew is still there, the two deck hands from  
14 that day are still there. They're doing their clean up,  
15 garbage cans, pumping out the lazarette, checking all the  
16 holes, and we're hosing down -- Bruce and I are hosing down  
17 the boat, refilling the fresh water tank, wiping down the  
18 bridge windows again. What else did we do? Usual, get ice  
19 for the Captain, get ice for the customers, get coffee  
20 ready, things of that nature, and then we boarded at 7  
21 o'clock, like we always do.

22 It takes about 15, 20 minutes, maybe, 25 minutes  
23 to board. I'm going to say we left at 7:30, like our usual  
24 time. We got out to the boat. Everything ran smooth. Of  
25 course, we dropped everybody off, brought back the 3 o'clock

1 group of people, and at this time, it's around 9 o'clock.  
2 That's our layover. We just dock up there, clean the  
3 restrooms out at the front of the building that the patrons  
4 use. We checked -- pumped out the lazarette again, cleaned  
5 up all the garbage, straightened up chairs. I'm trying to  
6 think if -- and then, that day, Captain Ronnie was on Friday  
7 night. That's when the -- as I was still -- as I was  
8 cleaning out the bathroom, and emptying out the trash for  
9 the patrons that's when I noticed the Caterpillar, another  
10 Caterpillar guy come on with his computer, and like I said,  
11 I'm not an engine -- I don't know what he was doing. They  
12 were just checking -- checking out something as far as the  
13 computer.

14 I did my usual things. Scrubbed some of the side  
15 of the boat by the exhaust -- by the exhaust area. At this  
16 time, I think it was about 10:30. They -- Captain Ron and  
17 we all took the boat for a test run with the  
18 Caterpillar -- with the man that worked with Caterpillar.  
19 It was probably about a 15, 20 minute run.

20 We got back to the dock around, maybe, ten to  
21 11:00. I'm just figuring, I never really looked down at the  
22 watch, but we left -- we left about five after to make our  
23 last run back out to pick up patrons like we always do.  
24 It's always a two-hour layover from 9:00 to 11:00 or so.

25 We got back out. I'd say that's about another

1 hour -- half hour run or so. Picked the patrons up, again,  
2 everything was running smooth. We brought them back, let  
3 everybody off, and did our usual -- our usual closing  
4 procedures. Cleaning up the bar, emptying out all the  
5 trash, pulling out all the trash, pumping out the lazarette,  
6 pumping out all the holes again, tying up the spring lines,  
7 hosing the boat down, checking the fuel.

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. MENDES: And leaving a fuel note for the  
10 gentleman the next morning, and then we were on our way out  
11 about -- I think we signed out at like five after 2:00 that  
12 morning. I get home around 2:30, take my shower. That  
13 night I hit -- that night I hit the bed real quick. So, I'd  
14 probably -- I went to bed around 3:00. Then I was off all  
15 day Friday. I did my -- I slept until probably about -- if  
16 you want to know my day off.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. MENDES: I slept until, probably, about noon,  
19 went shopping with my fiancée and my mother most of the  
20 afternoon.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me a minute.

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That would've been  
24 Saturday?

25 MR. MENDES: Saturday, yeah.

1 MR. FORD: Saturday noon.

2 MR. MENDES: This is Saturday. That's my off day.

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 MR. MENDES: Went shopping with my mom and my  
5 fiancée for most of the afternoon. We ate dinner at Chili's  
6 around 7 o'clock that night, got home around 9:00, stayed up  
7 and watched some of the game. Well, I watched all of the  
8 game, so that was probably about ten after 12:00, quarter  
9 after 12:00, I went to bed.

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. MENDES: And then I wake up again at 6:30 in  
12 the morning and came into the work dock on Sunday morning,  
13 and then did my garbage cans, air condition strainers,  
14 generator strainers, and then by that time, they called me  
15 over to the work dock.

16 MR. FORD: Did you feel rested that day?

17 MR. MENDES: Yeah. Yeah, no, I felt fine

18 MR. FORD: Is there any medications are you on?

19 MR. MENDES: No, I don't take anything.

20 MR. FORD: I think I'm good.

21 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis again. Mike, pumping  
22 bilages, do you check that periodically during the trip, or  
23 do you just pump them --

24 MR. MENDES: No, we check them in the morning,  
25 pump them first thing when we get there. We look down and



1 we check them again during layovers. When you're running,  
2 layover's from 12:00 to 2:00. So, right around quarter  
3 after 12:00, we pump them out again, as soon as we get off,  
4 far enough off to the boat and the engines idle down, and we  
5 just float, we get down into there. So, they're checked  
6 three times, once in the morning, once on layover, and once  
7 when we leave -- before we go home at the end of our shift  
8 if they're done again.

9 MR. CURTIS: You check all the holes?

10 MR. MENDES: All the holes.

11 MR. CURTIS: You didn't smell any diesel fuel or  
12 anything other than the normal?

13 MR. MENDES: Nope.

14 MR. CURTIS: Now, you mentioned the main dock  
15 versus the working dock?

16 MR. MENDES: Yes.

17 MR. CURTIS: What is each one used for?

18 MR. MENDES: The working dock -- the main dock  
19 runs everybody out, and the shuttles are running. The  
20 working dock isn't, they're on standby. We're there to  
21 vacuum, clean, get the boats ready in case we need to run  
22 two boats that day.

23 MR. CURTIS: They're in close proximity to each  
24 other?

25 MR. MENDES: I'm not good with the feet. Yeah,

1 it's right down the channel. I mean, it's not far over from  
2 the dock area.

3 MR. CURTIS: The Caterpillar representative, was  
4 that the same one that did the work? The same one that went  
5 out with you?

6 MR. MENDES: No.

7 MR. CURTIS: It was a different --

8 MR. MENDES: Yeah, it was a different gentleman.  
9 I never got his name.

10 MR. CURTIS: That's all I have right now.

11 MR. HARTLEY: Heath Hartley, from the Coast Guard.  
12 Did you know where their fixed firefighting system was  
13 located on the shuttle?

14 MR. MENDES: As far as -- I knew where the hoses  
15 was. I knew where the switch was on the panel, the control  
16 panel.

17 MR. HARTLEY: Okay.

18 MR. MENDES: I heard and I knew about things down  
19 in the engine room, but I never -- I couldn't tell you  
20 really where they were.

21 MR. HARTLEY: All right.

22 MR. MENDES: I mean, even if I knew where they  
23 were, as dark as it was, we couldn't see down in there, so,  
24 but I never was really showed anything in that.

25 MR. HARTLEY: Thank you.

1           MR. FORD: Are you going to be on duty tomorrow by  
2 any chance?

3           MR. MENDES: Tomorrow? Yeah, actually think so.

4           MR. FORD: Okay.

5           MR. MENDES: I've got --

6           CAPTAIN CONNER: Work dock.

7           MR. MENDES: Yeah, oh, no, yeah, I've got the work  
8 dock tomorrow.

9           MR. FORD: Okay, that's fine. I have nothing  
10 else.

11           MR. CURTIS: I just have one last question, Mike.  
12 The fire detection system for smoke, whatever, are you  
13 aware of that? That if you were to get smoke it would alarm  
14 somewhere?

15           MR. MENDES: That one there had a fire detector  
16 near the panel towards the stern, towards the bow -- the  
17 stern of the boat. One fire detector, but it never went  
18 off. Not that I could remember hearing.

19           MR. CURTIS: Where would it alarm at? Where would  
20 the alarm sound?

21           MR. MENDES: I couldn't even tell you. I thought  
22 it just came from the detector itself.

23           MR. CURTIS: Do you know of any underneath the  
24 decks that may have been down there to alert you to a fire?

25           MR. MENDES: I couldn't tell you, no.

1           MR. CURTIS: All right, well, appreciate that  
2 Mike. I don't know if anybody else has any questions. I  
3 appreciate your coming in under the circumstances.

4           MR. MENDES: That's okay.

5           MR. FORD: Wish you the best of luck.

6           MR. MENDES: Yeah. What's that?

7           MR. FORD: Have they done any tests, do you know  
8 the sex yet?

9           MR. MENDES: Oh, yeah, I've known the sex. I've  
10 got my second girl coming.

11          MR. FORD: Okay.

12          MR. MENDES: I'm waiting for my boy, but.

13          MR. CURTIS: The time is 9:10 a.m., and this  
14 concludes the interview of Mike Mendes. Thank you.

15                 (Whereupon, at 9:10 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

DEPOSITION SERVICES, INC., hereby certifies that the attached pages represent an accurate transcript of the electronic sound recording of the proceedings of the National Transportation Safety Board Interview regarding the Express Shuttle II, NTSB #DCA05MM002.

INTERVIEW OF MIKE MENDES

DECK HAND, SHUTTLE EXPRESS II

Eve Jemison, Transcriber