

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

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EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :
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INTERVIEW OF :
ROBERT LAWRENCE :
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held
on October 25, 2004, commencing at 9:50 a.m., in Tampa,
Florida, before:

BOB FORD, NTSB
LT. KEVIN ODITT
MAX MELENDEZ, FIRE MARSHAL
LT. HEATH HARTLEY, USCG
CHRIS CONNER, SUN CRUZ

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

2 MR. FORD: It's October 25th, we're at Coast Guard
3 MSO, Tampa. My name is Bob Ford, investigator in charge,
4 National Transportation Safety Board. I'll go around the
5 table, and have the other members that are present introduce
6 themselves.

7 MR. MELENDEZ: Max Melendez, State Fire Marshal.

8 MR. ODITT: Lieutenant Commander Oditt, MSO,
9 Tampa.

10 MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Heath Hartley, Chief of
11 Port Operations, Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office, Tampa.

12 CAPTAIN CONNER: Chris Conner, Port Captain, Port
13 Richey Casino.

14 MR. FORD: Sir, if you could state your name?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: Chief (00:34) Officer Robert
16 Lawrence.

17 MR. FORD: Could you tell me what your position is
18 here?

19 MR. LAWRENCE: Small passenger vessel inspector.

20 MR. FORD: Yes.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: Basically, inspectors for all size
22 ships.

23 MR. FORD: How long have you been with the Coast
24 Guard?

25 MR. LAWRENCE: Twenty-three years, coming up on 23

1 years.

2 MR. FORD: You understand the way the NTSB works?

3 We're here just to kind of see what happened, why it
4 happened, and if we can improve the process, find out if
5 there's anything we can recommend to make things better.

6 So, we're not here to second guess you or put you on
7 the spot, just to find out how the system works, and take it
8 from there. So, I guess the best thing to do, is, you were
9 one of the last inspectors on the Express Shuttle II,
10 correct?

11 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes.

12 MR. FORD: If you could just tell me a little bit
13 about the inspection. Maybe you do it the same way all the
14 time, or does it go by boats, but just how do you conduct an
15 inspection?

16 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, basically, we have the Coast
17 Guard 840 Inspection Book, and we show up on scene. My
18 other inspector was with me, Mark Kirsch. We meet with the
19 captains, and then we B- we had two boats that day, and we
20 went up there, and we do a, you know, I went up to the
21 bridge, and deducted the paperwork, and certificates, and I
22 was doing lifesaving, and my partner, Mark, you know, he was
23 climbing down in the engine rooms, and checking the stuff,
24 and we did B- we go right B- use the 840 book, which gives
25 you step by step, and it's kind of like a guideline for us

1 to B-

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: B- use for inspections.

4 MR. FORD: That's what you have there now?

5 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, I've got a copy of the one.

6 MR. FORD: We can get a copy of that, okay?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes.

8 MR. FORD: You met with Captain Chris, correct?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes.

10 MR. FORD: Then you did the documents? Did you
11 conduct any fire and boat drills or anything like that?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: We talked to the crew. Like, when
13 we're asking, they're with us --

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. LAWRENCE: -- doing the B- doing the bilage
16 systems,
17 and B-

18 MR. FORD: Yes.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: B- with the fire pumps, and (2:21)
20 alarms, and what we do is we B- and you know, we don't get
21 them on their way to do drills B-

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 MR. LAWRENCE: B- which we (2:27) the Coast Guards
24 slow down on getting underway and doing drills B-

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. LAWRENCE: B- where we think B- we were
2 talking this morning. Some of the things (2:33) maybe we
3 should start getting back to (2:36) every inspection.

4 MR. FORD: Yes.

5 MR. LAWRENCE: And we usually do like, walk
6 through's, talk to the crew, ask them, you know, this and B-
7 because we're doing both boats B-

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: B- that day, and we had the same
10 crew with us, and we're talking to guys. You know, they're
11 answering our questions as we go along, because I know, Mark
12 was telling me when he talked to the guys, they knew where
13 this stuff were B- the people we had that day. I don't know
14 who your guys were, but I mean they knew what the systems
15 were, they knew what B-

16 MR. FORD: Yes.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: B- you with fires like that.

18 MR. FORD: Yes.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: We can walk and talk to them, and a
20 lot of times we use it as a training lesson, too. You know,
21 if they don't, we help them.

22 MR. FORD: Yes, about how long did you spend, do
23 you think, on the Express II that day?

24 MR. LAWRENCE: Probably an hour and a half.

25 MR. FORD: Yes, is it part of the inspection

1 process to check invoices, say on the engines, or on the
2 electronics, or anything on the boat?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: We look at the wiring and stuff
4 like that.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: Just, you know, if we see anything
7 like a dead end wires and stuff like that. You know,
8 sometimes, you know, people change stuff. They'll put a new
9 radio in and they'll leave the old wire there or something
10 like that coming up from the batteries or something.

11 MR. FORD: Okay.

12 MR. LAWRENCE: And we'll get rid of that. Get rid
13 of this.

14 MR. FORD: You won't ask about recent repairs?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: No, we have to B- if they have to
16 do an engine change out B-

17 MR. FORD: Yes?

18 MR. LAWRENCE: B- there's people to notify. So,
19 they do, they notify. So, we go up and make sure B

20 MR. FORD: Yes.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: -- we look at the engine after it's
22 run. Major engine, you know, overhaul, removing the engine
23 out of the boat.

24 MR. FORD: Okay.

25 MR. LAWRENCE: Of course we have to come back up

1 and see the alignment and stuff like that.

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: But, you know, basic maintenance,
4 we don't.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: We don't do with that.

7 MR. FORD: How about the life jackets stowage on
8 this boat, do you recall how they were stowed?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: It must've been (4:11) underneath
10 that box. Is that how they're stowed?

11 CAPTAIN CONNER: Uh-huh, downstairs under the
12 bridge.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

14 MR. FORD: Do you pull all the life jackets out
15 and inspect them, or do you just pull out a few see, and
16 just B-

17 MR. LAWRENCE: Sometimes like B- sometimes we'll
18 have them all pulled out, if there's questions.

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 MR. LAWRENCE: But this time we had B- I remember
21 we were counting them. We pulled like half of them out of
22 there.

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: And we knew, okay, the other half
25 were in there, and they were all in good shape. They're,

1 you know, fairly new jackets.

2 MR. FORD: How about the smoke and heat detection
3 system, was there any way to test that?

4 MR. LAWRENCE: That day we didn't do it, because
5 we had the third party there.

6 MR. FORD: Yes.

7 MR. LAWRENCE: And we accept third party reports.

8 MR. FORD: Right.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's what it was, he was B-
10 he already told us it was fine.

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 MR. LAWRENCE: So, who's best to do the
13 inspection, is the people that install the darn things.

14 MR. FORD: Do you remember the name of the third
15 party, the guy's name?

16 MR. LAWRENCE: No, I didn't B- he's got all that.

17 MR. FORD: Okay.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Eric's got it. Did you ever fax
19 that into Eric? Yeah, who's that call? Florida fire?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Uh.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: It's somebody, but we got the
22 information.

23 MR. FORD: Okay.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: Because he faxed in a report for
25 us.

1 MR. FORD: Yes, so, you didn't do any engine room
2 inspection? It was your partner?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: I climbed down in the engine room
4 B-

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: B- later on to look, and that's
7 when I found there was a couple exhaust water leaks B-

8 MR. FORD: Yes?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: B- that they had to fix, and I was
10 down there for a little bit, looking at some of the stuff.

11 MR. FORD: And your overall impression of the
12 space?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: There was some, you know, like
14 there was some electrical wires that they needed to clean up
15 B

16 MR. FORD: Yes?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: -- and that there were, you know B

18 MR. FORD: Yes?

19 MR. LAWRENCE: B- previous work, the (5:30) was
20 tidied up.

21 MR. FORD: Could you give me your interpretation
22 of the regulations regarding these fixed suppression systems
23 for these small passenger vessels? Who's required to have
24 them, and who isn't?

25 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, you've got B- it all depends

1 on the size. You've got existing, you've got B- then you've
2 got the new regulations that they all have to have the fixed
3 firefighting system, which has a pull station B-

4 MR. FORD: Yes?

5 MR. LAWRENCE: B- you know, outside the engine
6 room, and that's one of our B- that's one of the biggest
7 problems the Coast Guard did, is the pre-existing boats B

8 MR. FORD: Yes?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: -- they allowed just to have the
10 CO2 systems, where you had to climb down in the space. The
11 bottle had to be outside the engine room. So, you had to
12 climb down another (6:12) and do it B

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: -- pull it. Since our old aluminum
15 boats, they're not required to have anything right now.

16 MR. FORD: Yes.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: But if you have a new B- brand new
18 aluminum boat come out, you have to have a fixed
19 firefighting system.

20 MR. FORD: Okay.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: So, you're going to see our old
22 boats having problems eventually. I would think.

23 MR. FORD: So, now, you're talking about that 1996
24 grandfather clause, is that basically what we refer to as
25 the grandfather clause?

1 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, that's when the fixed
2 firefighting system was implemented, and it's anything prior
3 to >96, you don't need it unless you're a fiberglass hull.
4 Then you can have CO2 B-

5 MR. FORD: Yes?

6 MR. LAWRENCE: B- or a pre-engineered system, or
7 an engineered system.

8 MR. FORD: Okay.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: I mean, there's two. An engineered
10 system is a system that was piped in. I believe that's what
11 you had, an engineered system where there was a bottle
12 piping, going into that space, and then you had to pull. A
13 pre-engineered one is one of these ones you pull right off
14 the shelf.

15 MR. FORD: Yes?

16 MR. LAWRENCE: Mounted in there, run the wires.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's B- see there's B- we
19 have a few different kinds of firefighting systems these
20 boats are having, and it all depends on the size, the year
21 the boat was built.

22 MR. FORD: So, the Express II was built today?

23 MR. LAWRENCE: He would have to have a fixed
24 firefighting system, where it would automatically shut down
25 your engines on discharge B-

1 MR. FORD: Yes?

2 MR. LAWRENCE: B- and that's the big thing.

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 MR. LAWRENCE: If that doesn't work, you also have
5 a pull station. Most of them put it right up by the B- by
6 the bridge.

7 MR. FORD: Yes?

8 MR. LAWRENCE:: That's where you find most boats.
9 If it was built to these new regs.

10 MR. FORD: Okay, but when do those regs B-

11 MR. LAWRENCE: >96, the Coast Guard switched.

12 MR. FORD: Okay, but the boat was built in >97,
13 so B

14

15 MR. LAWRENCE: But he's got a CO2 system.

16 MR. FORD: Yes?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: He has an engineer B- he could have
18 an engineered system B

19 MR. FORD: Okay.

20 MR. LAWRENCE: B- which he had, with the CO2
21 bottle outside the engine room, and the pull station right
22 at the bottle.

23 MR. FORD: Yes, okay.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: So, you have your choice of having
25 a pre-engine B- you have to have it B- a fire suppression

1 system in there.

2 MR. FORD: Yes?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: And it was your option of how you
4 wanted to install.

5 MR. FORD: Okay, so this boat strictly met
6 regulations B-

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

8 MR. FORD: -- as far as B- okay.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

10 MR. FORD: You definitely do not get involved in,
11 say, a preventive maintenance where you would say, let me
12 see the manual on the diesel engines, and what Caterpillar
13 says to do, and have you done this recently? Have you been
14 involved? No.

15 MR. LAWRENCE: Only when they have problems.

16 MR. FORD: Yes, okay.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: When the engine breaks down, and
18 there's passengers on it, and we go out to investigate why
19 the engine broke down.

20 MR. FORD: Yes?

21 MR. LAWRENCE: I've done several engine change
22 outs, where, you know, I want invoices. I want B- you know,
23 where's the manual? You guys are doing this. Where B- how,
24 you know, where's the manual to do it?

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. LAWRENCE: Stuff like that and that's on --
2 our bigger K-boats pretty much get involved in that.

3 MR. FORD: Are you pretty busy?

4 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes and no.

5 MR. FORD: Yes?

6 MR. LAWRENCE: There's up and downs, but we've got
7 a lot.

8 MR. FORD: Okay.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, I do B- I'm also B-
10 besides doing that I'm also over here doing crew ships, and
11 freight
12 ships B

13 MR. FORD: Yes, okay.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: B- and stuff like that.

15 MR. FORD: Okay, well, Max?

16 MR. MELENDEZ: (8:56)

17 MR. FORD: Who would like to ask questions next?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

19 MR. ODITT: Lieutenant Commander Oditt. Bob, if
20 this vessel were built today, it would still have a CO2
21 system installed. However, that CO2 system could've been
22 similar to what it is now, except, possibly the release
23 would've been outside of the void space. Is that what
24 you're B-

25 MR. LAWRENCE: No, I think B- I think the regs say

1 the bottle has to be upside the engine room, and you can do
2 it right there, as long as it's outside the engine room. I
3 don't think it's required to have a pull outside the space.

4 It can't be in the engine room that's why all these pre-
5 engineer systems, you have to have a pull outside the space.

6 The pre-engineered bottles go inside the engine
7 room. So, you can't go in there and pull it that's why
8 they're manually released from outside B-

9 MR. ODITT: From outside that's outside the engine
10 room?

11 MR. LAWRENCE: B- no, I believe it's not -- I
12 believe so, right.

13 MR. ODITT: Okay.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: If the bottle is outside, which is
15 that's going to be the engineered system, then you can do
16 the manual pull, because you're not going in the engine room
17 where the fire is. You're just going in another void to
18 blow it.

19 MR. ODITT: Most of your pre-engineer systems, are
20 they automatic --

21 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, they're all --

22 MR. ODITT: -- or are they manual release?

23 MR. LAWRENCE: Both.

24 MR. ODITT: You see combinations of them?

25 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, well, the pre-engineered is

1 automatic and manual. They have the fusible link on the
2 bottle that if it gets too hot, it'll go off, and that will
3 automatically shut your engines down to prevent it from
4 sucking all of the suppression out.

5 MR. FORD: This is Bob Ford. Could you define
6 pre-engineered? What do you mean when you say B

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Pre-engineered, an engineered
8 system is like I said, you have a bottle, and you pipe the
9 nozzle through the bulkhead, and then you have the nozzles
10 over the engine. That's an engineered system, where you
11 actually have to physically, put piping together, and make
12 the system.

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: A pre-engineered is, you buy it
15 right off the shelf, and it comes with wires, you know,
16 already ready to go, and you mount it in the engine room,
17 and then you hook the wires up to the control panel up on
18 the bridge.

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's where B- and that's
21 where it even says, pre-engineered's got to be up on the B-
22 at the operating station, because these have a B- the little
23 power head has an override switch, and is designed where, if
24 it goes off in the normal position, and the boat's in a
25 position where it's got to, you know, get out of the way of

1 another freight ship, or it's going to crash B-

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: B- you can switch it to override,
4 and start your engine back up.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's the test we do. We have
7 B- when we test boats that have pre-engineered systems B-

8 MR. FORD: Yes?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: B- the big test is, we get the
10 engine and everything running, the blowers, and we go down
11 there, and it's a little electrical plug on the bottle. We
12 unplug it, and then we witness everything shutting down.

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's simulates that the
15 bottle went up, but that's a pre-engineered system. It's
16 already done from the manufacturer, and all they have to do
17 is hook up the wiring.

18 MR. FORD: Yes, okay.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: Engineered, it's physically putting
20 something in, you know, with a bottle, and like I said,
21 piping tubing and all that stuff.

22 MR. FORD: And the Express II was an engineered
23 system, then?

24 MR. LAWRENCE: I believe so.

25 MR. FORD: Okay, Max?

1 MR. MELENDEZ: During the inspection, did you
2 notice any smoke detectors and their locations, down in
3 the B-

4 MR. LAWRENCE: Mark had one that was hanging, and
5 that's where we had the one B- we talked to Chris, and that
6 guy was here on board that day fixing all of that stuff.
7 So, we figured he had B- he'd signed off on everything that
8 was fixed.

9 MR. MELENDEZ: Where was it hanging?

10 MR. LAWRENCE: You'd have to talk to Mark.

11 MR. MELENDEZ: Oh, okay.

12 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, Mark. I think it was in the
13 engine room, where Mark said it was.

14 MR. MELENDEZ: You didn't notice any B- your walk
15 through detectors out?

16 MR. LAWRENCE: No B- Mark B- we split it up, and
17 then when Mark was paying attention B-

18 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay, all right.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: B- to that stuff, because he was
20 climbing. My back was killing me that day so, I was up on
21 the bridge.

22 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay.

23 MR. FORD: Heath?

24 MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Hartley, Coast Guard.

25 Bob, just to clarify, mostly, these pre-engineering systems,

1 where would you find that type of system? On a small
2 vessel, with like a very small engine room, typically B

3 MR. LAWRENCE: No.

4 MR. HARTLEY: -- or, would you find more
5 engineered systems like in this vessel, pretty large engine
6 space, you would have an engineered system?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: We've seen them on both. There are
8 pre-engineers that size B

9 MR. HARTLEY: Yes.

10 MR. LAWRENCE: -- but it was so expensive for a
11 lot of people, and they did whatever they could get, you
12 know. If people could get the CO2 system, they'd put that
13 in there, because it was B- they could do it themselves. A
14 lot of people went that way, but there are pre-engineered
15 systems big enough. I think they're up to two, three
16 hundred pounds I think, some of these systems, pre-
17 engineered systems are.

18 MR. HARTLEY: Okay.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: Pretty large.

20 MR. HARTLEY: For the drills that day, and for the
21 personnel in attendance, can you tell us who was in
22 attendance from the company for the inspection?

23 MR. LAWRENCE: Chris was always with us, but as
24 far as the crew members go, you know, I don't know who the
25 kids were. You know, it was in the morning, the crew

1 changed out, and when you see so many faces down there, you
2 know, we
3 don't B- and that's something else. We thought, well, maybe
4 we'll start documenting in our narrative who was the crew
5 that we dealt with. You know, especially in a business
6 where you have so many people.

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, the mother ships, the
9 casinos, we see, it's always the same people, but with the
10 shuttle boats, we don't, but that's something we're talking
11 about maybe we'll start documenting it. So, when Chris
12 calls up for an inspection, okay, Chris, we don't want John,
13 Sam, and Bill, we want three new people this time.

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. LAWRENCE: But they, you know, they work
16 together. So, they try to, you know, they try to stay, you
17 know, get the captain use to the same deck hands, so,
18 everybody knows where everybody's at B-

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 MR. LAWRENCE: B- and, you know, the more they work
21 together, they do, but as far as that I couldn't tell you
22 who they were.

23 MR. HARTLEY: What other vessel did you inspect
24 that morning?

25 MR. LAWRENCE: The Royal Express.

1 MR. HARTLEY: How was the inspection on that
2 vessel?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: It was good.

4 MR. HARTLEY: Any deficiencies?

5 MR. LAWRENCE: There was a couple on that one.
6 Every time we go up there, Chris has always got the boats
7 ready for us, and the hatch is open, life jackets out,
8 ready, you know, everything's, you know, you get to doing it
9 so many times, and they know what we expect.

10 MR. HARTLEY: Okay.

11 MR. FORD: Chris?

12 CAPTAIN CONNER: Nothing, thanks.

13 MR. FORD: I think when we dealt on the Panther,
14 one of the things we talked about was, the education
15 process. Wasn't that with you, where you'd go on scene,
16 where you deal with a lot of operators that don't understand
17 the CFR's? It may not have been with you, it may have been
18 with someone else, but do you get involved with owner's and
19 say, do you understand the CFR's and how to use them, and
20 where you fall in the CFR?

21 MR. LAWRENCE: That's usually with a new owner.

22 MR. FORD: Yes?

23 MR. LAWRENCE: A new operator, and that's
24 constantly.

25 MR. FORD: Yes?

1 MR. LAWRENCE: It's in, you know, I'm B- I do new
2 constructions.

3 MR. FORD: Yes?

4 MR. LAWRENCE: A lot of these CAT B- and these
5 people are clueless on CFR's.

6 MR. FORD: Yes?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: And that's where you're in, you
8 know, opening up the books for them, and teaching them.

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. LAWRENCE: But when you have operators that
11 are doing it all the time, we don't B- nothing comes up.

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: Because if there's a problem, they
14 know where to look.

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, they get everything
17 online, and you know, Chris probably knows his CFR's pretty
18 good.

19 MR. FORD: Yes, okay. This may be a tough,
20 subjective question on where you divide the line, but where
21 is the difference, in your mind, in looking at a bulk before
22 saying, I'll give you a work list and fix it, or I'm giving
23 you an 835 and no sail. Can you give me some examples B-

24 MR. LAWRENCE: If you issue a work list B-

25 MR. FORD: Yes?

1 MR. LAWRENCE: B- they're not sailing.

2 MR. FORD: Okay.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: You walk off an inspection, and you
4 give them an 835, 835's are for time.

5 MR. FORD: Yes?

6 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, here's B- here's B- like,
7 I think I gave them B- it was like 14 835's. Two of them
8 had a clear prior to carrying passengers, which they fixed
9 before we left.

10 MR. FORD: Yes?

11 MR. LAWRENCE: And then the other ones, I gave
12 them, like, two to three weeks.

13 MR. FORD: What were those two for?

14 MR. LAWRENCE: The water leak, I think it was.
15 The water leak, and the B- I don't know, I could look it up
16 in here.

17 MR. FORD: Okay, I can get it, then, later.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, it was the water leak and the
19 exhaust, and there was some B- maybe, I think that was the
20 only one maybe.

21 MR. FORD: Okay.

22 MR. LAWRENCE: Maybe it was only one prior to, but
23 if you issue a work list that means you've walked away and
24 they're not sailing.

25 MR. FORD: Okay, this is Bob Ford, by the way,

1 again, have you ever conducted a fire drill with passengers
2 on board on any of these small passenger vessels?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: Not on the small ones.

4 MR. FORD: Yes?

5 MR. LAWRENCE: Because, you know, the people, you
6 know, they really don't have that much room, and they get
7 scared. We do it B- we have been doing it on the big casino
8 boats now. We have the one out of John's Pass, and at Port
9 Richey.

10 MR. FORD: Yes?

11 MR. LAWRENCE: We've actually sailed with them.
12 This way, we get to see how everything's running, you know,
13 we see the engines running for their whole time they're
14 underway with the passengers on board, and we do conduct a
15 drill with passengers on board, but it's not B- they don't
16 disturb the passengers. It's just crew only.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: So, they just clear out the area,
19 but we don't make passengers put life jackets on, and go up
20 because, you know that's taking money away from the company.
21 They're gambling.

22 MR. FORD: Right.

23 MR. LAWRENCE: But we started this in the last few
24 years, riding with these guys. What's helped us out,
25 because when they're out there for five hours, we see a lot

1 more than we normally do if we're on there for an hour, and
2 everything's not running.

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, so, it's better that way
5 with the bigger, the K vessels, anything over 149
6 passengers.

7 MR. FORD: Okay, before I give you a wide open,
8 does anyone else have a question?

9 MR. ODITT: I have one question. Lieutenant
10 Commander Oditt. Did you actually see that they're logs?
11 They actually log their fire drills?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes, oh, I looked at that and they
13 had everything up there on the bridge.

14 MR. ODITT: What kind of information did they
15 actually have in their log?

16 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, conducted fire, man
17 overboard, and then had like two or three, it was like the
18 Captain, and two deck hands.

19 MR. ODITT: Did they specify which deck hands,
20 actually?

21 MR. LAWRENCE: I had their names. You had the
22 names in the book, if I remember right. Aren't the names in
23 the book, or the captain signs it.

24 CAPTAIN CONNER: Chris Conner, that was an issue,
25 I think that Heath and I discussed Friday, wasn't it? That

1 there weren't specific names on some of the drills, on a
2 specific log book they looked at. The drill had been done,
3 and signed off on, but not B- the whole crew wasn't listed
4 that was there on the Royal Express II. I did go back and
5 look at the Express Shuttle, and it had listed names,
6 sometimes, not in all entries.

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, in general, you see the names
8 written on there.

9 MR. FORD: This is Bob Ford again. Do you go back
10 to the company and ask to see what records they're keeping
11 in the office regarding drills?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: Not in the office.

13 MR. FORD: Not in the office?

14 MR. LAWRENCE: Most of the boats, they carry their
15 log books with them.

16 MR. FORD: Yes?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: The captain's have everything in a
18 (18:48) bag, or something.

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 MR. LAWRENCE: A bag, or something, and you look
21 through it, and you see it, and you just confirm that it's
22 done, because they have to have their (18:53) inspections in
23 it. It's always in one log.

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 MR. LAWRENCE: The lifesaving maintenance, they

1 usually -- they keep it in one thing.

2 MR. FORD: Okay, if no one else has anything, I
3 was just going to give you a wide open. Do you have
4 anything that you think would improve the process, or any
5 suggestions, or recommendations? I know, sometimes, you get
6 to a certain level and you don't want to start pushing
7 policy, but B-

8 MR. LAWRENCE: Oh, no, you know, we're talking
9 about lessons learned.

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. LAWRENCE: Stuff like that and it was like, I
12 was trying to find a policy letter this morning, we were
13 talking. In >98, >99, I think, the (19:26) we use to B-
14 well, I don't know. This is how Miami's policy was. We got
15 the boats underway every time we did an inspection.

16 MR. FORD: Yes?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: And some of these, you know, big
18 cables, you had to get out B- taken out, or get out, and
19 then in >99, it came down from headquarters saying that you
20 don't have to get the boat underway every time, because of
21 the work load the Coast Guard is dealing with B-

22 MR. FORD: Yes?

23 MR. LAWRENCE: B- to speed up the process. So,
24 you can get more inspections in the day, and you get the
25 boat underway like every B- now we're at a five-year CIO, so

1 it's like the third year, you get the boat underway, and
2 then they issue the CIO and you get them underway. I think
3 that may be where we have slacked.

4 If we got them underway every year, and they knew
5 it B-

6 MR. FORD: Yes?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: B- they are going to have a crew
8 there, and we're getting it underway, we're going to witness
9 a man overboard, and not depend on a log.

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. LAWRENCE: So, that's something where, I
12 think, we should get back to doing that. I don't think
13 we're over worked that much where we couldn't get the people
14 underway. It's going to upset them, because they don't B- a
15 lot of people don't want to even spend five cents. They get
16 pissed off because we make them put retro reflective tape on
17 their life rings.

18 MR. FORD: Yes.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, that's so expensive, and
20 tell them to light their engines up, we're getting underway
21 for an hour?

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, but you know, so what.
24 They'll have to learn.

25 MR. FORD: Right.

1 MR. LAWRENCE: You know, and I think we should get
2 back to getting these things underway, and this way, we
3 wouldn't be sitting here, we'd know that crew knows what's
4 going on.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: If it was B- if they even had an
7 opportunity to put this thing out. It was B- the way that I
8 heard, talking to the guys, it happened so fast.

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. LAWRENCE: But that's one thing we B- I think
11 we're going to try to push here.

12 MR. FORD: Okay, anyone else? Well, that
13 concludes our interview. Thank you very much.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: Okay.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:10 a.m., the interview was
16 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 ROBERT LAWRENCE

MARINE INSPECTOR, U.S. COAST GUARD

Eve Jemison, Transcriber