

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 :
MARK KIRSCH :
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held
on October 25, 2004, commencing at 10:10 a.m., before:

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

P R O C E E D I N G S

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MR. FORD: It's October 25th, 10:10 a.m. My name is Bob Ford, investigator in charge with the National Transportation Safety Board. I'll go around the table, and everyone can introduce themselves.

MR. ODITT: Lieutenant Commander Kevin Oditt, MSO, Tampa.

MR. MELENDEZ: Max Melendez, State Fire Marshal.

MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Heath Hartley, Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office, Tampa.

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

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

MR. KIRSCH: Chief (indiscernible) Officer, Mark Kirsch, Marine Inspector, MSO, Tampa.

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

MR. KIRSCH: Over 20 years.

MR. FORD: Twenty years, and could you tell me a little bit about your experience with inspections?

MR. KIRSCH: My experience with inspections, basically, is marine inspector here at MSO, Tampa, for two and a half years, doing various barge inspections, T-boat inspections, K-boat inspections B-

MR. FORD: Yes.

MR. KIRSCH: -- throughout the area.

1 MR. FORD: I should've explained. The way the
2 NTSB works, I'm sure you know. We're not here to second
3 guess you. We're not here to put the rubber hoses or
4 anything like that on you. We just want to find out what
5 happened and maybe improve it, or come up with some
6 recommendations that can help you. We're not out to get
7 you.

8 MR. KIRSCH: I understand.

9 MR. FORD: If you could just tell me, go through
10 the inspection on the Express Shuttle II.

11 MR. KIRSCH: I arrived in the morning about 6:30,
12 quarter to seven, to perform the inspection. The Express
13 Shuttle II was the first one that Chief (indiscernible)
14 Officer Lawrence and myself went on to inspect. With two
15 people, it's fairly easy, you usually split up and one
16 person handles the navigation side of it, and the other one
17 handles the engineering side of it, which was mine.

18 I proceeded down below. Mr. Lawrence went up to
19 the bridge to check the bilge and engine spaces, and verify
20 highwater alarms, and check the overall conditions that are
21 below the decks, as we normally do.

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 MR. KIRSCH: As I proceeded down into the engine
24 space, one of the first things I did note was that one of
25 the smoke detectors that was there was dismantled and

1 dangling below that and I noted it in my records to bring up
2 as we went through the inspection. Overall cleanliness of
3 the engine spaces bilges were fine. All the bilge alarms
4 worked.

5 The standard things that we do look for is how the
6 tidiness of the wires are, the electrical systems, and
7 everything seemed pretty well in place and intact.

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. KIRSCH: A couple dangling here and there that
10 we noted to bring up to them to reinforce, keep out of the
11 areas of machinery, electricals, or whatever it may be.

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 MR. KIRSCH: I proceeded from stem to stern to
14 look in all the spaces, and everything was fine, and B-

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 MR. KIRSCH: -- all the alarms seemed to work when
17 reported by Mr. Lawrence.

18 MR. FORD: When you go into these engine spaces,
19 will you ask if they've had any recent repairs on the
20 engines, or if they've done any recent repairs? Would that
21 be a typical question?

22 MR. KIRSCH: It would be a typical question if we
23 really noticed something that looked fairly new.

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 MR. KIRSCH: At the time that I was doing the

1 inspection, I didn't notice anything outright that
2 was B- that had been B-

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 MR. KIRSCH: -- repaired or B-

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. KIRSCH: -- new, and I didn't know whether Mr.
7 Lawrence had been asking the same question, but nothing just
8 jumped out at me to say anything was done.

9 MR. FORD: Yes, okay.

10 MR. KIRSCH: So, we went up and proceeded to talk
11 to the Captain about the underside, the bilage spaces, and
12 noted, again, the fire alarm, the smoke alarm, and he had
13 stated that the repairman in the company was on its way B-

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. KIRSCH: -- that day to come and repair that
16 system.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. KIRSCH: They had been on it, I think he had
19 mentioned the day before, and said he had to come out with
20 the new parts to repair it.

21 MR. FORD: Okay.

22 MR. KIRSCH: By the time we had left the other
23 vessel, the gentleman was on site B-

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 MR. KIRSCH: -- to repair those B-

1 MR. FORD: Okay.

2 MR. KIRSCH: -- systems.

3 MR. FORD: How about preventive maintenance?
4 Would you ask any questions regarding, is there anything
5 that you have due coming up, or any inquires about
6 preventive maintenance?

7 MR. KIRSCH: Preventive maintenance is covered
8 under their manuals.

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. KIRSCH: They have to maintain it, and they
11 have to keep a log of what they've done in the past B-

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 MR. KIRSCH: -- and unless, again, as we're going
14 through the inspection, unless something is really jumping
15 out at us, other than asking the questions and looking at
16 the log, of what their maintenance schedule holds.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. KIRSCH: If there's excessive grease or oil,
19 or B-

20 MR. FORD: Yes.

21 MR. KIRSCH: -- just indications that it isn't
22 being kept up, then, of course, we're going to reiterate to
23 make sure that they get back on their schedule, and then
24 take everything into account.

25 MR. FORD: What is your interpretation of the

1 regulations regarding fixed suppression systems in these
2 engine spaces?

3 MR. KIRSCH: As far as the need, or B-

4 MR. FORD: Yes, who's required, who isn't? This
5 is a manual system on board.

6 MR. KIRSCH: Right.

7 MR. FORD: Why wouldn't it be automatic? Do you
8 know of the regulations for it?

9 MR. KIRSCH: Because B- I'm not exactly sure. I
10 can't quote them word for word.

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 MR. KIRSCH: Although we believe that it is, is
13 that your automatic systems are basically, on the larger
14 vessels that are basically man spaces as far as with alarms
15 and things like that B-

16 MR. FORD: Yes.

17 MR. KIRSCH: -- and the area that they would
18 cover B-

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 MR. KIRSCH: -- as far as what they need.

21 MR. FORD: You were there to observe the fire and
22 boat drills or any drills they had on board?

23 MR. KIRSCH: Right.

24 MR. FORD: Tell me what you did.

25 MR. KIRSCH: The drills that we have that we

1 normally do with the passenger vessels that we do, have B-

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 MR. KIRSCH: -- gone to more of the non-active
4 side at every inspection.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. KIRSCH: Generally, it's every B- their COI is
7 valid for five years. So, we usually hit it sometime
8 between their second and third year as far as an active
9 underway drill.

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. KIRSCH: We, generally, just put out a
12 scenario through it, and walk them through, and talk them
13 through. Not necessarily talk them through, have them talk
14 us through what they would do in case of the scenario.

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 MR. KIRSCH: How are they going to shut of
17 ventilation to the areas? Where are they going energize
18 their fire pumps, if they have them? Where the hoses are
19 located, the fire extinguishers, what type, what B- how
20 many?

21 MR. FORD: Yes.

22 MR. KIRSCH: Where they are located, and we
23 generally do that as long as we feel confident that
24 their B-

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. KIRSCH: -- understanding of their equipment
2 on their boat.

3 MR. FORD: Suppose you looked at the boat, and you
4 felt it was B- there weren't enough fire extinguishers on
5 board? What would be the process for you, to have more fire
6 extinguishers be put on board?

7 MR. KIRSCH: Well, one of the things is that it's
8 noted in the regulations according to the type and size of
9 space --

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. KIRSCH: -- of the vessels, how many are B-

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 MR. KIRSCH: -- how many are needed.

14 MR. FORD: Okay.

15 MR. KIRSCH: If they're B- if at that time that
16 they fulfill the requirement of how many are needed B-

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 MR. KIRSCH: -- but we think they're more, we'd
19 have to bring it back to the command and analyze whether
20 they're actually needed.

21 MR. FORD: If you feel that it's not covered or
22 not enough coverage, and you wanted to exceed regulations,
23 you would have to bring it back to your command?

24 MR. KIRSCH: Right, we couldn't make it on the
25 spot --

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 MR. KIRSCH: -- and say, hey, we feel that this
3 space isn't going to be covered enough -B

4 MR. FORD: Yes.

5 MR. KIRSCH: -- by what you have on board.

6 MR. FORD: Okay.

7 MR. KIRSCH: We can make a recommendation
8 that B-

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. KIRSCH: -- they might want to carry one or
11 two, but actually, requiring them to have more on board
12 would be B-

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 MR. KIRSCH: -- would have to be regulation,
15 because they could always just say, well, I've got what I'm
16 required to have.

17 MR. FORD: Have you ever been in that situation
18 where you felt a boat did not have enough extinguishers?
19 Have you ever seen that?

20 MR. KIRSCH: No, and for the most part, when you
21 get into the passenger safety, the dinner, the excursion
22 boats that are carrying passengers, they usually exceed B-

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 MR. KIRSCH: -- what the requirement is.

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. KIRSCH: To some extent.

2 MR. FORD: Did you test the fire pump?

3 MR. KIRSCH: I believe we energized the fire pump
4 on that one, yeah.

5 MR. FORD: Okay, we can go around the table.

6 MR. ODITT: Lieutenant Commander Oditt, did you
7 actually receive the fire servicing report later on, after
8 they'd already arrived?

9 MR. KIRSCH: I did not receive it, but I believe
10 Mr. Lawrence did receive it. When we left that day, we had
11 explained to the vessel representative, Captain Conner that
12 we would accept the certificate from the third party when he
13 had finished and when he had tested the systems.

14 MR. ODITT: What do you typically see in those
15 reports?

16 MR. KIRSCH: You see any new installation, any
17 repair to the installation, and a verification that the
18 attendant surveyor had tested the systems, and all the
19 alarms were working properly, and all devices were working
20 properly.

21 MR. FORD: Okay, Max?

22 MR. MELENDEZ: (Indiscernible.)

23 MR. FORD: Heath?

24 MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Hartley, Coast Guard.

25 Mark, do you recall the crew that was present for the drill

1 on the Express Shuttle II?

2 MR. KIRSCH: I don't remember personally, what
3 their names are. There were generally two deck hands there
4 on the morning that we were walking through, and the
5 Captain.

6 MR. HARTLEY: Do you recall the scenario as far as
7 fire drill?

8 MR. KIRSCH: We didn't run through a particular
9 place, but we did mention that they had a -- I believe that
10 we mentioned if they had a below deck fire, what would you
11 do? What do you need to do, and how do you secure
12 ventilation to the spaces? Where's the fire pump energized?
13 Where's your closest CO2 system, and what would you do with
14 your passengers?

15 MR. HARTLEY: How did they perform as far as
16 responding?

17 MR. KIRSCH: As far as responding, they performed
18 fine. Notification to the Captain, and let him know that
19 there would be a fire on board. Grabbed the closest
20 extinguisher. Showed us B- they didn't do it exactly, but
21 showed us where the vent covers where to shut off the
22 ventilation to the space below, where the fuel shut off's
23 were. They were all familiar with the equipment and the
24 boat itself.

25 MR. HARTLEY: Was Captain Chris present?

1 MR. KIRSCH: Captain Chris was there that morning.

2 MR. HARTLEY: Thank you. Captain Chris?

3 MR. FORD: Bob Ford again, what did they say they
4 would do with the passengers? If they had an engine fire,
5 where would they direct the passengers to go?

6 MR. KIRSCH: Away from the fire for the biggest
7 thing.

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. KIRSCH: If you have the passengers B-

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 MR. KIRSCH: -- passengers forward of the fire,
12 they're going to egress towards the front of the boat. If
13 they're behind the fire B-

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. KIRSCH: -- they egress them toward them to
16 the back, or above, wherever they had to get them away from
17 the fire so that they could attend to the fire themselves.

18 MR. FORD: Okay.

19 MR. KIRSCH: That was one of the B- that was their
20 general concern.

21 MR. FORD: Okay, life jackets stowage? Do you
22 remember how they were stowed? The life jackets?

23 MR. KIRSCH: The life jackets on those, I believe,
24 were below the seat zone B-

25 MR. FORD: Okay.

1 MR. KIRSCH: -- on that boat. They remind me of
2 Express Shuttle II.

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 MR. KIRSCH: They were in the forward compartment,
5 underneath part of the bow, and there were some more on the
6 second deck.

7 MR. FORD: Yes, anyone else? I'll give you the
8 same opportunity. Any suggestions, recommendations,
9 anything you could offer that could improve the process,
10 improve safety, basically?

11 MR. KIRSCH: There's always a lesson learned out
12 of every day. If you haven't learned a lesson some day, and
13 you hope it's never lessons like this.

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. KIRSCH: Any event can happen at any time, no
16 matter what. Whether it's your personal stuff, or whether
17 it's out on the job. We need to get back to, or try to,
18 bring the real life situation into effect.

19 If any vessel that we inspect is generally,
20 underway 90 percent of their time, rather than sitting on
21 the dock, then, everything, as far as we go with drills, or
22 whatever they may be, probably need to be, underway or in
23 their general form of working environment.

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 MR. KIRSCH: Unless you're under the full stress

1 of people doing whatever they're doing. Whether they're
2 coming back from a trip, or whether they're just out
3 enjoying their trip, I think that the ambiance of everything
4 else going on, for you to be able to maintain what you're
5 supposed to do, adds a lot to it.

6 MR. FORD: Okay. So, then, a real life situation
7 would actually be having a fire drill while passengers on
8 board? How practical would that be? To conduct fire drills
9 as they're operating?

10 MR. KIRSCH: Well, I think as we learned just
11 using the scenario the other day when we were working on
12 this other ocean drill of St. Petersburg. We had as many
13 people, as far as their crew B-

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 MR. KIRSCH: -- available, and some of them act as
16 passengers. If that was available, doing a relief on some
17 of these boats, with the crew that they would have manned
18 out somewhere, bringing them back in would work fine. As a
19 matter of fact, just the other morning when I was B- I
20 returned to the company to run morning drills with some of
21 their people. So, we did have more than just the boat crew
22 on board.

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 MR. KIRSCH: And that's exactly what we saw.

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. KIRSCH: I ran a fire drill actively underway.
2 They performed fine. They reminded their passengers to put
3 on their life jackets and move away, and give them room to
4 do what they needed to do, and reiterated again, whether
5 it's customers going to their vessel, or whether it's their
6 own people.

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 MR. KIRSCH: They're still passengers B-

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. KIRSCH: -- and their safety is still utmost.

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 MR. KIRSCH: And they responded in kind.

13 MR. FORD: You went out on Saturday on the big
14 boat?

15 MR. KIRSCH: I was on Saturday on the big boat.

16 MR. FORD: Okay.

17 MR. KIRSCH: Yes.

18 MR. FORD: How about surprise inspections or
19 drills where you just show up one day an unplanned
20 inspection? How would you feel about that?

21 MR. KIRSCH: I wouldn't have a problem with that.

22 I've always, you know B-

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 MR. KIRSCH: -- been under myself, I said, again,
25 as I said earlier, you never know when something is going to

1 happen B-

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 MR. KIRSCH: -- and, yes, it could
4 inconvenience B-

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 MR. KIRSCH: -- the entity itself, but we're not
7 talking about inconvenience, we're talking about safety of
8 passengers B-

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 MR. KIRSCH: -- and the crew, to be able to make
11 it to and from their destination B-

12 MR. FORD: Okay.

13 MR. KIRSCH: -- as always.

14 MR. FORD: Thank you, anyone else? Well, that
15 concludes our interview. Thank you very much.

16 MR. KIRSCH: Thank you, sir.

17 (Whereupon, at 10:25 a.m., the interview was
18 concluded.)

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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 MARK KIRSCH
MARINE INSPECTOR, U.S. COAST GUARD

Eve Jemison, Transcriber