

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 KEVIN ODITT :
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held
on Monday, October 25, 2004, commencing at 1:15 p.m., at
the Marine Safety Office in Tampa, Florida, before:

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

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

2 MR. FORD: It's October 25th. It's MSO Tampa. My
3 name is Bob Ford, Investigator in charge, National
4 Transportation Safety Board, and we'll go around the table.

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

6 MR. HARTLEY: Lieutenant Heath Hartley, U.S. Coast
7 Guard, Marine Safety Office, Tampa.

8 MR. CONNER: Chris Conner, Port Captain, Port
9 Richey Casino.

10 MR. FORD: If you could introduce yourself, sir?

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Lieutenant Commander
12 Kevin Oditt, Chief of Prevention at Marine Safety Office,
13 Tampa.

14 MR. FORD: What would that involve?

15 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: I am responsible for
16 all of the inspectors that do all of the safety exams,
17 compliance exams, for domestic and foreign vessels.

18 MR. FORD: How long have you been here?

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: I've been here just
20 over a year now.

21 MR. FORD: How many people are working under you?

22 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: It varies. We just
23 recently reorganized. I also am responsible for four
24 facilities as well, so.

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Twenty plus people.

2 MR. FORD: Just a little bit about your Coast
3 Guard background.

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: My first tour as a
5 marina -- in fact, the first tour was aboard a ship, two
6 years as a student engineer, damage control officer, and I
7 had one tour for three years as a marine inspector, then
8 went to graduate school, the University of Michigan, for
9 naval architecture for engineering, and then I had a tour
10 headquarters at NSE, the standards engineering division
11 where I was with the lifesaving and fire protection
12 division.

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Then, I had a tour at
15 the security, Port Security, a new director at those
16 (indiscernible) and then I was stationed here.

17 MR. FORD: I'm going to give you the opportunity
18 to tell me the pluses, the minuses, and the problems in the
19 inspection business.

20 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Well, just one of the
21 concerns, specifically, with respect to this incident, is
22 the acceptance of a third party survey report, and it just
23 said for fire servicing specifically, whether it be
24 extinguishing or detection as well.

25 The concern just is that there's an apparent or a

1 required standard of certification for -- the company could
2 just start up and you would never even know if they're
3 certified or not. So, you'd have to really be familiar with
4 your area and who is reliable and who's not.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: It's really up to
7 each inspector to be out there, and they would really have
8 to look into something if they thought something was wrong,
9 in order to question it, or to identify something that maybe
10 isn't right.

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, it's not -- it
13 doesn't appear to be a set standard for fire servicing
14 companies.

15 MR. FORD: How would you recommend to fix that
16 problem? Who do you think should certify them?

17 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: I'm not sure of all
18 the actual entities or organizations, but I'm sure that
19 NFPA, or somebody like that has general standards that they
20 apply for servicing companies.

21 MR. FORD: Yes, okay. How about the regulations
22 on the suppression system, the fixed suppression and
23 detection as to your interpretation of them?

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Well that -- and
25 that's been one of my concerns about this -- this specific

1 incident is that the -- the vessel, apparently, it sounds as
2 though there was not an alarm. The detection system did not
3 work. Is that what appears?

4 MR. FORD: That's the information we have now.

5 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Okay, so that
6 concerns me first, because -- but obviously the fire wasn't
7 able to get out of control, and the crew was not able to
8 respond to the fire appropriately. So, the concern is -- my
9 biggest concern is the detection system, and why it did not
10 alarm to give them adequate time to respond to the fire, and
11 it would've also given them that -- it would've maybe had
12 them thinking that there's a fire, and that they should be
13 following their fire procedures, depending on how they're
14 training was.

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, that's my
17 concern.

18 MR. FORD: Okay.

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: The detection system
20 did not work. Now, concerning a CO2 system, there's been
21 questions about pre '96, and post '96 regulations, and I
22 just want to clarify that even -- if this vessel were built
23 today, with general purpose resin as it was built, it could
24 still have an engineered system as it does now. So, it
25 would be a manual pull system, and it would be the exact

1 same situation that you have now.

2 There's a few additional regulations that they
3 would've had to comply with, but for all intensive purposes
4 that probably would not have -- for example, they would've
5 had to have non-combustible lining on the spaces that
6 actually divide, or separate the engine room from an
7 accommodation space.

8 So, for example, if this room were the engine
9 space, and there's a void space up forward, the only space
10 that would actually have to have a non-combustible lining,
11 would be above you, if that was an accommodation space.

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, that really
14 wouldn't have, probably, stopped a fire in this situation
15 here. So, I guess my point is that the CO2 system could be
16 exactly as it is now. Possibly the controls would've been
17 located in a different location. Probably more accessible,
18 but it still would've been in the same situation where if
19 the detector didn't work, and if the crew didn't respond
20 appropriately, there would've been, possibly, the same
21 result as we have now.

22 MR. FORD: How would you feel about underway fire
23 drills on these type of boats? With passengers on board?

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: I think it would be
25 good to get underway, as was mentioned by the other

1 inspectors, and if not every year, at least at every initial
2 COI and the mid-period exam. So, every other year would be
3 ideal, probably.

4 I guess a concern will be for some of the smaller
5 operators. When you're dealing with six to twelve
6 passengers, it's difficult for them to actually have
7 passengers on board, because what passengers truly are going
8 to want to go through a Coast Guard exam?

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, I think it would
11 be difficult for the smaller operators, possibly for the
12 larger ones. As we do with some of the casino vessels, they
13 show up, they go offshore, and actually, we'll do the exam
14 while the vessel's actually in operations.

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, it's an ideal
17 situation to see the vessel operating as it -- as it intends
18 to.

19 MR. FORD: What is the jurisdiction of MSO Tampa?
20 Where do you cover? From where to where along the coast?

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: We cover from south
22 of Fort Myers, up to the Panhandle.

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, we have over 300
25 vessels -- 300 small passenger vessels in our zone.

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: With 10 or so
3 (indiscernible) those are your larger passenger vessels.

4 MR. FORD: How many inspectors?

5 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: We have, with Fort
6 Myers, our detachment. We have 10 inspectors. We do have
7 one civilian that is very knowledgeable in that area, and
8 very qualified, and we have two dedicated (indiscernible)
9 small passenger and (indiscernible) inspectors here at
10 Tampa, and we have two down in Fort Myers as well.
11 So, a total of around five people that are primarily focused
12 just on the small passenger vessel industry.

13 MR. FORD: You came here a year, and I'm sure a
14 lot of these inspectors were already here. So, how do you
15 know, or evaluate your inspectors now that you're wearing
16 the hat, and now you're responsible, and you could possibly
17 know none of them? Everyone has strengths and weaknesses.
18 How do you evaluate inspectors?

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Really, you probably
20 have to get out with them.

21 MR. FORD: Yes.

22 LTS And then you just -- just from seeing how
23 they interact with the industry --

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and how they

1 interact with others in the office, and you really got to
2 get out there to see what they -- how they actually perform
3 an inspection.

4 MR. FORD: Now, after you've had an incident like
5 this, where it's just been inspected a week early. I'm sure
6 you've already talked to the inspectors, what else do you
7 look at?

8 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: We'll reevaluate the
9 whole entire process. We'll sit down and probably do a --
10 sort of a safety stand down, and actually discuss what the
11 lessons learned are. Probably we'll wait until this
12 investigation is done.

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: And actually,
15 probably immediately, we'll actually emphasize the human
16 factor side.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Which is one of the -
19 - we think one of the big problems here. The training and
20 not necessarily the training of just the crew that's at the
21 inspection, but also the training of the crews that may --
22 obviously, some of these industries turn over and they have
23 other crew members coming. So -- and that's a concern. So,
24 it's -- maybe they need to educate the vessel operators at
25 what their responsibilities are.

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: With respect to the
3 regulations.

4 MR. FORD: Now, I'm going to throw you a real hard
5 ball. Now that you're homeland security, how does that
6 impact marine safety? Has it impacted marine safety in your
7 opinion?

8 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Sure, it's additional
9 -- it's an additional work load. However, we are -- we're
10 going to have two more inspectors --

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- next year,
13 arriving, so, we have to shift priorities, but we still
14 focus and every vessel still receives the same exam. So,
15 anything that's statutorily required, we still actually --
16 we keep up with our statutorily requirements.

17 MR. FORD: Do you feel comfortable with what you
18 have? Now you're going to get two more inspectors?

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: We'll have two more
20 inspectors, which will allow us to obviously, maintain the
21 expertise, and --

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- still take on
24 additional work.

25 MR. FORD: And resources, thanks.

1 MR. MELENDEZ: Max Melendez. I have one question
2 regarding fire investigation site. I think there's a delay
3 calling me out that day, and talk in the fire department,
4 they assumed that the Coast Guard would handle, you know,
5 it's out on a boat, and it's Coast Guard. I guess they were
6 notified that because of fire, you know, they had to call
7 the State, and so I think there was a delay, but what point,
8 I guess, it's your office that notified the State, or is it
9 something the fire department has to think about regarding,
10 you know, the fire investigation side?

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Well, typically --
12 actually, Mr. Harley is our -- part of our investigation
13 department.

14 MR. MELENDEZ: Oh, good.

15 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: They would actually
16 show up on scene, and they would probably coordinate with
17 the local fire marshal. So, I don't think that we would
18 necessarily call the State. We would probably work with the
19 local fire marshal, who I would assume --

20 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay.

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- knows to call the
22 State.

23 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay.

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Is that? I don't
25 know if that's the same assumption.

1 MR. MELENDEZ: No, that's same, yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Okay, obviously, we
3 try to work with all the local officials, where ever
4 possible.

5 MR. MELENDEZ: Yes, okay.

6 MR. FORD: Back to one more, Max, bringing that
7 up. We met with the Port Richey Fire Department the other
8 day, and in talking with the captain, he's referring to
9 the -- he doesn't know the -- he's calling it the front and
10 the rear, and I asked him what would help you in dealing
11 with this? Well, his jurisdiction covers nine miles out.

12 I said, you've got fire boats? No fire boats, so
13 what would he like to see, and he said, well, he would like
14 to be more involved with the Coast Guard, or at least where
15 a rapport with the Coast Guard, and a get together. Is
16 there any move in that direction to get together with local
17 fire departments?

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: No, we work with the
19 local fire departments. I guess, somewhere like that it
20 becomes more and more removed from the central Tampa Bay
21 area --

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and we don't have
24 as many vessels, possibly, operating out of there, but we do
25 work with the local fire departments wherever possible --

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and we work with,
3 whether it be mass casualty --

4 MR. FORD: Yes.

5 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- which could involve
6 fire, and often times will have the fire departments from
7 Manatee, Pineallas, and Hillsboro County involved. So, we
8 do drills. We have mass casualty drills annually.

9 MR. FORD: Yes.

10 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Whether it be search
11 or rescue, also --

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and a mass -- a
14 mass rescue plan as well. So, in this instance, if
15 unfortunate passengers had been on board, you would have,
16 potentially, a hundred plus passengers to have to actually
17 respond, and there's a plan that we have in place with the
18 various partners across our area of responsibility that we
19 work with.

20 MR. FORD: What I picked up on, the captain and
21 the fire department said that when they boarded the boat, he
22 wasn't that concerned because it had a steel hull. Who
23 should he contact to say, listen, you guys have training
24 schools, I don't know if you would allow local fire
25 departments in. Just basic boat terminology, boat

1 construction. How would he go about to reach out to the
2 Coast Guard? I mean who would he contact?

3 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: He could contact our
4 office.

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: In fact, we have --
7 we have the American Victory, which is a victory ship.

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Before World War II
10 ship, and the actual -- actually, the Hillsboro County Fire
11 Department, they go on board this vessel, and they actually
12 do training --

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- for shipboard
15 response. So, if they got in contact with us, we could work
16 with them, with the local operators in their area -

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and we would be
19 able to put them in contact with, for example, if it were
20 Sun Cruz --

21 MR. FORD: Yes.

22 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and the local fire
23 department in their area, and they could come down and
24 become familiar with the vessel, the terms, understand how
25 vessels are configured --

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- and possibly what
3 they're constructed of.

4 MR. FORD: Yes. Bow, stern -

5 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Right.

6 MR. FORD: -- like I say, front and back, okay.

7 So, I'm going to give you the wide open on recommendations,
8 opinions, or anything you'd like to offer.

9 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Well, I'm not sure if
10 I -- now, do you understand, though, about the CO2, the
11 suppression system? This would not necessarily have been an
12 automatic system either.

13 MR. FORD: Yes.

14 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: That is -- and there
15 are certain -- the regulations provide when you -- if you do
16 choose to put in an automatic system, which you can.

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: It would be approved
19 by the Coast Guard.

20 MR. FORD: Right.

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Whatever kitty
22 (phonetic sp.) whoever these -- all these manufacturers have
23 them.

24 MR. FORD: Right.

25 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, if they did put

1 an automatic system in, it would have to have time delays
2 and so on --

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- but they want to
5 be required to have one. So, it would still be -- you would
6 still have to fall back onto the crew --

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- knowing how to
9 respond to it.

10 MR. FORD: Absolutely.

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, I guess the most
12 difficult thing that we're going to have is trying to
13 actually get the crew members, the ones that aren't there
14 for every single inspection, and make sure that they
15 actually are trained, and work more with the vessel
16 operators --

17 MR. FORD: Yes.

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- to emphasize to
19 them, you know, their responsibilities, and maybe come up
20 with some method for tracking it as well.

21 MR. FORD: Yes.

22 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Whether it be a log,
23 maybe not -- maybe a company log. Instead of putting it on
24 a -- individual vessel logs put in a company log where we
25 can verify that.

1 MR. FORD: Yes.

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: With new employees,
3 to make sure that they're doing that.

4 MR. FORD: Okay.

5 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: That might be a way
6 to help track that.

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have already put the
9 ball in motion.

10 MR. FORD: Yes.

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: And that's what we'll
12 have to do, and take these lessons learned here, and we try
13 to have, for example, industry days, also --

14 MR. FORD: Yes.

15 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- for all the small
16 passenger vessels, and what we'll do is, we -- we'll
17 probably ask -- maybe have some speakers come in and explain
18 the new -- you know, we'll take this as a -- this incident
19 here.

20 MR. FORD: Yes.

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: Maybe ask Captain
22 Connors to come in and actually speak to them about the
23 value of, you know, their responsibilities, and what needs
24 to happen in the lessons learned.

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, we hope to have
2 an industry date here soon, naturally.

3 MR. FORD: Yes.

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: And --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You can invite the Fort
6 Richey Fire Department.

7 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: And we can invite --
8 actually what we'll do is we can invite -- we'll have a
9 session with the fire departments so they can get to know
10 their local --

11 MR. FORD: Yes.

12 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: So, that's what we'll
13 -- that will probably be the first thing we do here in
14 December, is --

15 MR. FORD: Yes.

16 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: -- get all the
17 operators, as many as will attend together.

18 MR. FORD: Okay, yes, sounds good. Any other
19 questions, or anything else you'd like to --

20 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ODITT: That's it, actually.

21 MR. FORD: Thank you very much. That concludes
22 the interview.

23 (Whereupon, at 1:30 p.m., the interview was
24 concluded.)

25

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 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER KEVIN ODITT,
CHIEF OF PREVENTION, US COAST GUARD

Eve Jemison, Transcriber