

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

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EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :  
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :  
:  
INTERVIEW OF :  
CAPTAIN ROBERT GUPTON :  
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held  
on Saturday, October 23, 2004, commencing at 11:45 a.m.,  
in Tarpon Springs, Florida, before:

- BOB FORD, NTSB
- BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB
- NANCY MCATEE, NTSB
- MAC MELENDEZ, FL PD



1 and I believe, firefighter Hogan. Not knowing exactly where  
2 on the Cotee River the vessel was, my initial thoughts were  
3 to respond to the Sun Cruz docks, thinking that -- that  
4 might be where it was at, which is located on Bayview  
5 Street, 7917 Bayview Street, I believe.

6           So, we responded there. We always go through the  
7 City Park to pull up to the Sun Cruz docks over there, and  
8 as we pulled into the City Park, the docks were empty. We  
9 didn't see anything, and as I was getting ready to call  
10 dispatch, firefighter Poland looked out to the West and  
11 could see the black column of smoke with the Coast Guard  
12 helicopter circling over.

13           So, we knew, from that point that it was up the  
14 river, and I told her to respond out to Harbor Pointe, which  
15 is the western most point of the city limits, I believe that  
16 you can actually drive to. So, from Sun Cruz docks at  
17 Bayview Street, we responded.

18           We were going to come down Bay Boulevard, all the  
19 way out to Harbor Pointe, and we went straight to the end of  
20 Harbor Pointe, which is 4317 Harbor Pointe Drive, and I got  
21 off the engine, walked through the property of the house  
22 that is there on the point, and that's where I got my first  
23 visual of the Sun Cruz shuttle boat with flames showing from  
24 the third deck, and a heavy column of smoke.

25           MS. MCATEE: At that point, what were your

1 actions?

2 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Okay, I believe it was as I was  
3 responding out there to the point, I did request an engine  
4 from Pasco County, seeing that we had such a large column of  
5 smoke, I knew we needed some assistance.

6 At that point, I started trying to decide if we  
7 were going to be able to get to the Sun Cruz vessel from  
8 there. I'd also called our dispatcher and asked if we had a  
9 police boat in the water, and they advised me that Corporal  
10 Koch was on his way to put the police boat in the water.

11 As I walked back on -- the residence there is  
12 owned by the Changs. As I walked back on the Chang's sea  
13 wall, I saw Pasco County Sheriff's Office Marine III  
14 circling the boat. I'm not sure exactly when, but somewhere  
15 at that point, we'd been advised there had been three people  
16 on the boat, and they had been taken off the boat, and Pasco  
17 County was requesting to know where to send a rescue for one  
18 case of smoke inhalation.

19 At that time, I first started trying to call  
20 Marine III on systems universal to confer with him to see  
21 exactly where those patients were, and he did come up on  
22 systems universal, and told me that they were on another  
23 boat, and that we needed to pick a location where we could  
24 have that patient picked up.

25 Engine 11 from Pasco County Fire Rescue arrived on

1 the scene, and we were discussing with Pasco County dispatch  
2 whether we were going to have the patients brought to Harbor  
3 Pointe's dock, and then I just heard over the radio, I  
4 believe it was Pasco, saying that the patients were going to  
5 Hooters. So, they had Rescue 11 from Pasco County Fire  
6 Rescue respond to Hooters to pick up those patients.

7 At that point, me and Captain Truell, of Engine  
8 11, decided that we would try to make an attack on the fire.  
9 From where the boat sat, it looked like it was beached on a  
10 sand bar right there on the west side of the channel. I  
11 called Marine III, asked them how deep the water was right  
12 there, to see if we would just be able to walk out towards  
13 the vessel. He advised me we would not be able to because  
14 the channel was approximately eight feet deep right there.

15 So, me and Captain Truell -- in fact, Engine 11,  
16 as far as we could, down the Chang's property, pulled a 200-  
17 foot courtyard lay off the back of the engine, took it down  
18 the sea wall to the beach, pulled a 250-foot inch and three  
19 quarter pre-connects, dragged those out to the beach, and at  
20 that point, myself, Captain Truell, and firefighter Quinn  
21 had arrived at the scene at that time, in one of our squad  
22 vehicles, proceeded to hook up those lines and stretch them  
23 out onto Marine III to be able to get out there and actually  
24 fight fire.

25 MS. MCATEE: Did you actually have to board Marine

1 III in order to --

2 CAPTAIN GUPTON: We had to board Marine III, and  
3 it was a little difficult because it was a pretty low tide,  
4 and as we got down towards the water's edge, we all got  
5 stuck in the mud. It was very deep mud, and so, it took us  
6 a little while to actually get on Marine III and get in a  
7 position to where we could make passes on the boat.

8 We used the hand line that we had taken with us to  
9 cool down the boat enough to where we could actually get on  
10 board and pull Marine III up to the Sun Cruz shuttle and  
11 actually board the Sun Cruz shuttle and actually fight fire.

12 MS. MCATEE: So, now you've actually boarded --

13 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Yes.

14 MS. MCATEE: -- the ship itself? All right, then  
15 what did you do from that point on?

16 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Okay, at that point I should say  
17 that all through that other pieces of apparatus were  
18 arriving randomly. I don't know when they all arrived on  
19 the scene because I was caught up in the fire fighting  
20 activities. I know that Captain Truell had requested an  
21 additional two engines from Pasco County, and they had also  
22 -- I heard on the radio they wanted to know if we wanted the  
23 ladder truck, to try to get the ladder truck back there to  
24 try to fight fire, but there was no way that -- that would  
25 work.

1           The ladder truck did come anyway. I don't know  
2 how that happened, but we -- once we felt like we'd cooled  
3 down the vessel enough to where we could board the vessel,  
4 it was actually at the -- I'm trying to think if it was the  
5 front or the rear deck. I have it in pictures at the  
6 station, but I can't remember for sure if it was the front  
7 or the rear deck.

8           By then, most of the upper decks had caved down to  
9 the lower deck, but we boarded the vessel, and proceeded to  
10 try to knock down the fires as best as we could, and getting  
11 water down in there. There were several openings in the  
12 floor that we could see. By then, the bulk of the fire was  
13 down below the deck, and then we proceeded to try to knock  
14 down the fire there.

15           We fought the fire on the boat until we ran out of  
16 air in our bottles, and Marine III had picked up other  
17 firefighters to come and relieve us off of the boat.

18           MS. MCATEE: How long did it take you, finally, to  
19 bring the fire under control?

20           CAPTAIN GUPTON: I wouldn't say the fire was  
21 completely under control. We were there for hours putting  
22 water on the fire, switching out crews. I made two trips  
23 out to the Sun Cruz shuttle boat. We knocked down the fire  
24 as best we could and then, I don't know, at one point when I  
25 was in the shore, the boat started drifting up the channel,

1 but tow boats had come, and they tied off to it, and the  
2 boat had actually shifted from being right here at the point  
3 to just slightly over to the side of the point.

4 At that point, Pasco County's Battalion Chief I  
5 and Battalion Chief III had come on scene, assumed command,  
6 and we decided that we would try to use foam to get the fire  
7 contained inside the vessel, and without having any good  
8 place to put a foam inductor, because our lines ran out onto  
9 the beach, into the mud. The tide was coming in, so our  
10 hoses were being covered with water.

11 The decision was made to dump the foam directly  
12 into Engine 11's tank and fight fire that way, and it worked  
13 quite well, you know, but it just took a lot of water and a  
14 lot of time to actually get it to where it wasn't still  
15 actively burning. I believe it was the engine's were hot  
16 for a long time. I mean, they kept steaming, you know, it  
17 was difficult with everything, all the fiber glass that fell  
18 down inside the boat.

19 MS. MCATEE: At what point in time do you recall  
20 that you felt like the fire was out enough for them to take  
21 the ship under tow?

22 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I don't know exact time. I  
23 wasn't looking at my watch. We had, at some point, switched  
24 -- they had stopped calling command -- command and switched  
25 it to operations. One of the Battalion Chiefs was running a



1 whole operations. We'd also switched our radio channel. I  
2 left that out. From a fire tactical channel to an incident  
3 command channel that the Sheriff's Department also has, so  
4 that everybody was on the same frequency through the course  
5 of the fire.

6 I don't know if the operations called the fire  
7 under control at any certain point. I know that I was on  
8 the boat with a firefighter, Jeff Scott, from our  
9 department. I was one of the last two on the boat when we  
10 decided that we had done as much as we could do for the  
11 boat. If I had to guess, I would say it would've been  
12 sometime in between 15:30 and 15:45 hours, if I had to make  
13 an educated guess.

14 MS. MCATEE: If that time was called in, it should  
15 be reflected on the 911 log?

16 CAPTAIN GUPTON: With Pasco County.

17 MS. MCATEE: Okay, Pasco County.

18 CAPTAIN GUPTON: When we have big operations, we  
19 switch from talking, usually with our dispatch, to switching  
20 with Pasco County. Especially when we're working with  
21 County firefighters. So, I don't believe that would be on  
22 our 911, or with our dispatchers, but it should be with  
23 Pasco.

24 MS. MCATEE: You briefly mentioned it  
25 indiscernible) to explain the radio system?

1           CAPTAIN GUPTON:  Yes.

2           MS. MCATEE:  Especially when you're doing a lot of  
3 mutual aid in big incidents.  If you could run us just  
4 through a basic run?

5           CAPTAIN GUPTON:  Okay, basically, when we're  
6 running incidents, we're dispatched through the City of Port  
7 Richey.  We're on the same frequency as our police  
8 department.  So, we can always have contact with our police  
9 department.  As soon as we go to an incident that requires  
10 landing a helicopter that we're going receive an engine from  
11 Pasco County, or any scene that we're going be running with  
12 Pasco County, Pasco County assigns a fire tactical channel.

13           There's four fire tactical channels for the west  
14 side of Pasco County.  They advise us which tactical  
15 channel.  We switch our radios over, and we operate off  
16 those tactical channels.  The police department and the  
17 sheriff's department do not have those tactical channels in  
18 their radios.

19           So, at some point, operations had made the  
20 decision to switch to an incident command frequency, which  
21 all the radios on the west side of Pasco County have that  
22 incident command frequency, and all radios also have systems  
23 universal, which I'd mentioned earlier, I called Marine III  
24 on.

25           MS. MCATEE:  Okay.

1           CAPTAIN GUPTON:  It's more supposed to be used for  
2 an emergency.  You're not supposed to talk on systems  
3 universal.  It's only for serious things.  The police use  
4 systems universal a lot, but we hardly ever use it.

5           MS. MCATEE:  I heard you mention volunteer  
6 firefighter.  Are you a combination department?

7           CAPTAIN GUPTON:  We are a combination department -

8           MS. MCATEE:  Okay.

9           CAPTAIN GUPTON:  -- paid, volunteer, and we also  
10 have part time.

11          MS. MCATEE:  If you could give me just a brief  
12 rough run down of your training and certifications?

13          CAPTAIN GUPTON:  My personal?

14          MS. MCATEE:  Yes, your personal.

15          CAPTAIN GUPTON:  Well, I've been paid, with the  
16 City of Port Richey, since April of 1993.  I'm a State  
17 certified fire inspector.  Multiple company officer classes,  
18 I am an EMT, I don't know what else I could really tell you  
19 exactly.

20          MS. MCATEE:  Do you guys do the Firefighter I,  
21 Firefighter II, or?

22          CAPTAIN GUPTON:  State certification for  
23 firefighter, for paid firefighters, and I did that back in  
24 1992, or '91, I'm sorry, and EMT school in '92, but all paid  
25 firefighters have to go through the Fire Academy -

1 MS. MCATEE: Okay.

2 CAPTAIN GUPTON: -- and we just recently started  
3 sending our volunteers to the Firefighter I, and then to the  
4 Firefighter II.

5 MS. MCATEE: I'm sure I will think of something as  
6 we go around the room.

7 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Okay.

8 MS. MCATEE: So, I'll move on to the next person.

9 MR. FORD: Bob Ford, NTSB. Do you do follow up  
10 lessons learned after an incident like this?

11 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Yes, and there was actually an  
12 amateur videographer, I guess you could call him. He's been  
13 around for as long as I can remember. He follows the fire  
14 trucks and ambulances to big calls and videotapes it, and a  
15 lot of times, when there's a big incident like this, he'll  
16 bring us a copy of the videotape so we can critique it later  
17 on.

18 The fire was on Sunday the 17th.

19 MR. FORD: Yes.

20 CAPTAIN GUPTON: On Wednesday the 20th, he told me  
21 he would have a tape there at the station, and I haven't  
22 seen him yet, so --

23 MR. FORD: Yes.

24 CAPTAIN GUPTON: -- I'm waiting to be able to see  
25 the tape. We did, briefly, discuss it with the crews that

1 were on duty, actually, Wednesday and today, we've discussed  
2 things that happened, things that might could've been done  
3 differently, but overall, we feel like the scene went about  
4 as good as it could've gone --

5 MR. FORD: Yes.

6 CAPTAIN GUPTON: -- for where that boat was  
7 located. It was a difficult position for us to actually be  
8 able to get to the boat and fight fire.

9 MR. FORD: Some of the questions, I'm not trying  
10 to put you on the spot or second guess you.

11 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Oh, no problem.

12 MR. FORD: We're only here to try to see if  
13 there's something that can be improved.

14 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Right.

15 MR. FORD: The decision to board the boat --

16 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Yes.

17 MR. FORD: -- you felt comfortable at that time to  
18 put people on there?

19 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Yes, I did.

20 MR. FORD: Okay.

21 CAPTAIN GUPTON: At the time, especially when we  
22 were still standing on shore, even though the boat was well  
23 involved, all three decks were still visible.

24 MR. FORD: Yes.

25 CAPTAIN GUPTON: There are photos that show that

1 by the time we were getting on Marine III, it looked like,  
2 if I've got my positioning right with the vessel facing  
3 mostly south, the starboard upper decks had looked like they  
4 had started to come down. By the time we actually boarded  
5 the vessel, all those decks had pretty much collapsed down  
6 onto the lower deck with a few beams still upright.

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Again, I'd have to look at the  
9 pictures. I felt like we boarded the rear of the boat, but  
10 as I think of the boat facing south, we must've boarded the  
11 front of the boat when we went on it, actually.

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 CAPTAIN GUPTON: But, I'd have to look at the  
14 pictures to be sure.

15 MR. FORD: How about any boat training? I mean,  
16 do you go down to the docks every once in a while and walk  
17 through the boats and look what you may have to face one  
18 day?

19 CAPTAIN GUPTON: No, not on Sun Cruz, we haven't  
20 in years, we did when they initially set up, but we haven't.  
21 We've done multiple trainings over the years on fighting  
22 boat fires at the marinas, which is the only place that  
23 we've really had boat fires before. We've never actually  
24 had one out in the river, but we never had actually prepared  
25 for having to drag lines out through the water like that and

1 fight fire.

2 MR. FORD: Yes, and then, no training with the  
3 Coast Guard or no response drills with the Coast Guard?

4 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I've never done anything with the  
5 Coast Guard, no.

6 MR. FORD: (Indiscernible) opportunity, something  
7 you think could be done, or something you'd like, a wish  
8 list or anything to improve the process, anything you can  
9 think of?

10 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Well, I mean, I don't know. That  
11 was kind of a unique situation that -- dragging that hose  
12 down through the mud like that to fight fire. I think,  
13 given any situation where you have a boat that's close  
14 enough to shore to where it looks like we could do that it's  
15 a matter of just stretching the lines out and actually being  
16 able to get to the boat and fight fire.

17 I agree that working with the Coast Guard, trying  
18 to come up with some kind of training with them would be  
19 good, but we don't see them very often, though.

20 MR. FORD: Yes.

21 CAPTAIN GUPTON: They're based out of Clearwater,  
22 Sand Key, and it's very rare that we see them. There's been  
23 a lot of times that we have emergencies on the Sun Cruz boat  
24 that they arrive afterwards, because I guess they're much  
25 further south and the Sun Cruz shuttle has already arrived

1 in with the patients for medical emergencies.

2 MR. FORD: Yes.

3 CAPTAIN GUPTON: But we don't see them very often.

4 MR. FORD: So, you would like a closer  
5 relationship with the Coast Guard?

6 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I don't think it could hurt.

7 MR. FORD: Yes.

8 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I mean, I -- the more training  
9 the better.

10 MR. FORD: Right.

11 CAPTAIN GUPTON: The more familiar you are. I  
12 believe the reason the scene went so well is because of how  
13 much training we do with Pasco County, and particularly the  
14 captain that's on Engine 11. We have a very good  
15 relationship and we work very well together, and I believe  
16 that's what led to this scene going as good as it did, as  
17 far as I'm concerned.

18 MR. FORD: Yes.

19 CAPTAIN GUPTON: As of how well we worked  
20 together.

21 MR. FORD: Okay, thank you very much.

22 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Uh-huh.

23 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis, NTSB. Captain, could  
24 you estimate the distance off of land? I don't know if we  
25 got that before.



1 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I didn't say --

2 MR. FORD: Are we going to be able to keep this?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you need it, you can  
4 keep it.

5 MR. FORD: Maybe we'll just have them mark it with  
6 a pen, if that's all right?

7 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Well, I don't know if this is  
8 high tide or low tide.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just give it a rough  
10 estimate.

11 MR. FORD: The Board members (indiscernible).

12 (Discussion off the record.)

13 MR. FORD: It's just a basic approximation that we  
14 can scan it in, we can show it at our Board meeting, where  
15 the fire was.

16 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Okay. In my best estimate, is he  
17 grabbing a pen to mark --

18 MR. FORD: Yes, he's going to get a marker.

19 CAPTAIN GUPTON: In my best estimate, the mark I'm  
20 going to make on here is going to be -- it was a very low  
21 tide, and looking from this aerial photo, you can see where  
22 the water would run down to --

23 MR. FORD: Maybe just put an X on it?

24 CAPTAIN GUPTON: -- the edge of the channel, and  
25 so, in my best estimate, I would estimate that the boat was

1 right there on just the west side of the channel.

2 MR. FORD: Okay.

3 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Again, in some of the photos that  
4 were taken, there was a free lance photographer that took a  
5 lot of photos with a zoom lens, and I believe in some of  
6 those photos, you can actually see the channel marker, or  
7 markers, to get a reference of exactly where that boat was  
8 sitting.

9 We also took some photos ourselves. We had burned  
10 a copy of the CD to bring up here, and we couldn't find it  
11 this morning, so I'll have to burn another one.

12 MR. FORD: Okay, we'll be around through most of  
13 next week.

14 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would that be Mr. Mark  
16 Smith, the photographer?

17 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Mr. Mark Smith has a whole CD  
18 compilation of 84 photos that he took. Some of them are  
19 double, so I would say there's probably 75 photos on the CD.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

21 CAPTAIN GUPTON: That shows -- he was there very  
22 soon after we arrived on scene. He has pictures of us  
23 connecting our hose lines on the beach, and getting aboard  
24 Marine III. He has pictures of us making passes in Marine  
25 III to cool the boat down, and then pictures of us actually

1 boarding the vessel.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was there any evidence of  
3 fuel being spilled, pollution, outside the vessel?

4 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Not that I noticed. I mean, I  
5 believe that's an all metal hull, and I don't think the hull  
6 was damaged at all, but that's just, you know, from what I  
7 saw.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The fuel tanks, there's  
9 some meltdown on top on the fuel tanks. Was the fuel  
10 involved?

11 CAPTAIN GUPTON: We weren't sure. We knew the  
12 fuel tanks were there. We were assuming that the fuel tanks  
13 might've had a factor in how much fire there was down below,  
14 but we couldn't see anything. I mean, we could see down in  
15 there, but we couldn't make out anything down in there  
16 exactly, to tell if they were or not. I mean, it didn't  
17 seem like the fire was burning out of control like there  
18 would've been a large amount of fuel involved, but I don't  
19 know for sure.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. I understand there  
21 may have been some rekindling? Do you have a response to  
22 that?

23 CAPTAIN GUPTON: No, I heard a rumor that or  
24 someone say that when the boat was towed down to Tarpon  
25 Springs that it had rekindled, and somebody went out there

1 to cool it off, but I don't know any of that for a fact.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would that be the County  
3 then?

4 CAPTAIN GUPTON: No, Tarpon Springs is in Pinellas  
5 County, and that would be Tarpon Springs Fire Department, I  
6 believe.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I was there that morning  
8 when that happened, the rekindle --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Different jurisdiction.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- I was there.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

12 MR. CURTIS: At some point they pumped the fuel  
13 off the vessel, do you know when that occurred, or is that  
14 after you were --

15 CAPTAIN GUPTON: I don't know of anything being  
16 done. I know that after we had finished our operations on  
17 the boat, we were picking up our hose, trying to get all of  
18 our equipment back together, is when I heard it was being  
19 towed, and so, I don't know anything else about it.

20 MR. CURTIS: That's all I have, thank you.

21 MR. MELENDEZ: Max Melendez. Who assumed command  
22 over all operations there?

23 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Chief Greg Gude with Pasco County  
24 Fire Rescue was the first chief on scene to establish  
25 command. There was some -- Pasco, initially, was calling

1 when we were setting up, calling for command.

2           Myself, and neither Captain Truell, had  
3 established command with Pasco County because we had our  
4 hands full with what we were doing, but it is pretty  
5 standard that if your first engine on scene can't establish  
6 command because of operations that the second engine on  
7 scene would be able to establish command, but it took  
8 everybody that we had on both of those first two engines to  
9 try to get into firefighting operations. So, neither one of  
10 us had actually established command until Chief Gude got on  
11 scene.

12           MR. MELENDEZ: With reference to that with the  
13 patient and the other person out there on the boat, you had  
14 information that in fact they did treat one patient?

15           CAPTAIN GUPTON: For smoke inhalation.

16           MR. MELENDEZ: And the information on the other  
17 two crewmen were they were still with the fire rescue  
18 people, or where were they at?

19           CAPTAIN GUPTON: The last --

20           MR. MELENDEZ: Did you get that report at all? I  
21 know you're out there fighting fire on the boat, but --

22           CAPTAIN GUPTON: Right, the last thing I heard  
23 was, as we were trying to decide where the rescue needed to  
24 come, and I was standing with Captain Truell, and that's his  
25 rescue out of his station, and we were trying to decide if

1 the docks at Harbor Pointe, which were probably a couple  
2 hundred yards away from where we were, would be a suitable  
3 place for the boat to bring the patients. I heard, I  
4 believe it was Pasco, say that the patients were on their  
5 way to Hooters at the dock there.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was Rescue 11?

7 CAPTAIN GUPTON: That was Rescue 11.

8 MR. MELENDEZ: That's all I have.

9 MS. MCATEE: Nancy McAtee, NTSB, just a couple  
10 more things. You said when you arrived on scene that the  
11 fire seemed to be engulfing deck three, is that correct?

12 CAPTAIN GUPTON: You could see flames from deck  
13 three, yes.

14 MS. MCATEE: Do you remember what side? Was it  
15 isolated to one side of the boat, or on the other, or was it  
16 pretty much, at that point --

17 CAPTAIN GUPTON: When -- my first initial  
18 thoughts, when I looked at the boat, were that I could see  
19 the flames coming from deck three. I, initially, didn't  
20 think I could see anything from what I assume would be the  
21 first deck, or the second deck, but the wind was blowing out  
22 of the southeast, and the column of smoke, I believe, was  
23 blowing out towards the northwest, and it was only a matter  
24 of minutes before flame was visible on all three decks, and  
25 I believe the wind was going through their open doors, and

1 just pushing the fire out that side. As opposed to having  
2 it come up, it was going out the starboard side.

3 I believe that's just because there were open  
4 windows and doors. As the wind was blowing through, it was  
5 just pushing it out that side, but within a matter of  
6 minutes, there was fire visible through every window on all  
7 three decks.

8 MS. MCATEE: You made the remark that you've done  
9 drills with Pasco County and other surrounding areas. For  
10 an example, what type of drill might you do with them?

11 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Well, we've done a lot of  
12 training with -- on different buildings in particular. For  
13 stamp out operations, sprinkler system operations, pulling  
14 hose, you know, hooking into hydrants, working with how --  
15 between my self and Captain Truell, how we like to have  
16 things done, particular communications, but it's just random  
17 at times that we'll get together and you know, decide, hey,  
18 let's go raise ladders on this particular building, or let's  
19 pull hose on these buildings.

20 MS. MCATEE: Okay, that's all I have.

21 MR. FORD: That's all I have, we're through.

22 MS. MCATEE: All right, thank you Captain Gupton.

23 CAPTAIN GUPTON: Thank you very much.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, at 12:10 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

## 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 CAPTAIN ROBERT GUPTON

PORT RICHEY, FL FD

Eve Jemison, Transcriber



